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THE
ADVANTAGES
OF
EDUCATION,
OR, THE
HISTORY OF
MARIA WILLIAMS,
A TALE FOR MISSES AND THEIR MAMMAS,
BY
PRUDENTIA HOMESpun,
IN TWO VOLUMES.

"Let this great truth by all be understood;
"That all the pious duties which we owe
"Our parents, friends, our country and our God;
"The seeds of ev'ry virtue here below,
"From discipline alone and early culture grow."

GILBERT WEST.

VOL. II.

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M.DCC.XCIII.

THE
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OF
EDUCATION

OF THE
HISTORY OF
MARIA WILLIAMS



PRESENTED BY
IN TWO VOLUMES

"Education is the great secret of all the undertakings."
"That all the plans which we own."
"Our parents, friends, our country and our God."
"The seeds of every virtue and every talent."
"From discipline alone and every talent grows."
GREAT WISDOM

VOL. II

LONDON:
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THE
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CHAP. I.

AS soon as Miss Raby's return was known, Maria flew to the Manor; and to the eternal honour of female friendship be it mentioned, that Charlotte suspended all the agonizing anxiety occasioned by

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her uncertainty of the fate of a silver muslin, which had not arrived at the time expected, and listened with entire attention to her friend's narrative.

All her entreaties to know the name of the dear man were however ineffectual. Maria held herself bound in honour, and would not divulge it, though Charlotte, to encourage her confession, urged, that if a man of fashion, he must be one of Pierpoint's acquaintance, and by applying to him, she could have a most satisfactory account of his character.

This hint, though it failed of the desired success, did not pass Maria unregarded. At the first opportunity she could seize, she affected carelessly to ask the Major, if he was acquainted with Sir Henry Neville.

It is in the power of cunning to affect simplicity, but simplicity itself, when it would assume art, finds it too thin a disguise. A

hesitating way of uttering the name, and the known intriguing character of that gentleman, gave Mr. Pierpoint an idea, that this was the fictitious Stanley, whose story he had heard from Miss Raby; and his suspicion was confirmed by Maria's blushing, when he fixed his eyes on her, and interrogatively repeated the word Neville. Being therefore too much a modern man of honour, to spoil the Baronet's design, he gave only such general outlines of character, as would attract the approbation, rather than the abhorrence of an unexperienced girl.

He said that he was quite a man of fashion; appeared in the first circles; and was universally admired."

"Was he dissipated," Maria asked.

Hum.—"A little perhaps—for he was of a lively turn, but he had a generous spirit, and a good heart."

As I always love to define words that convey a general meaning, I will inform such of my readers, who want information, that a generous spirit means a man, who squanders, with indiscriminating prodigality, the superflux of wealth, which he knows not properly how to bestow; and a good heart only implies, a being capable of compunction, when alarmed by the unexpected consequence of some criminal act, but who never carries his penitence so far as to lead to reformation. As they are generally liberal and entertaining associates, the world is very kind to those classes of sinners; it dignifies the profusion of the former with the names of benevolence and generosity, and loses in pity, for the transient starts of conscience which the latter feel, all the horror that should be excited by reiterated crimes.

If any person, charmed with the above account, wishes to adopt the characters I have described, I must warn them, that unless fortune has bestowed on them rank and birth,

birth, their efforts will be to no purpose. They may be as extravagant and licentious as his Grace, but they never will obtain more honourable epithets, than those of a thoughtless dog, or an incorrigible scoundrel.

When we are pleased with the speech, we seldom scrutinize the speaker. Though Maria's small stock of penetration had been sufficient to enable her to discover the pride, self-conceit, and ignorance of the Major, even his fiat had great weight, when thrown into the preponderating scale that adjudged the merit of her idol: nor could she, in the pride of her heart, avoid informing her mother, that Major Pierpoint knew Sir Henry, and gave him an excellent character.

I shall not expatiate at large on the nuptials of Mrs. Pierpoint. In compliance with her father's express desire, they were celebrated at the Manor with all imaginable festivity and hospitality. Maria attended her friend through all the ceremonious round of

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visiting.

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visiting. Her affectionate breast was truly disposed to rejoice at an event, which, she concluded, must confirm the happiness of her beloved Charlotte: but she soon perceived, with concern, that the same sorrows which had persecuted Miss Raby, continued to harass the soul of Mrs. Pierpoint. Her gowns, though made by the first artist in London, did not fit with all their expected niceness. She had used every effort to exhibit in her dress a model of the newest fashion, yet Miss Mandeville had anticipated a trimming, upon which she so much piqued herself, that she had reserved it for her most splendid visits. Add to this, the colour of her chariot was two shades darker than she had desired, and her diamond ear-rings, though ordered to be exactly the same as Lady Twaddles, were inferior in size and lustre.

Maria wondered that such disappointments should be of sufficient consequence to cloud with chagrin the morning of wedded love. She knew not that the heart often tries to
escape

escape the pressure of real sorrow, by ruminating on trivial vexations. Charlotte's bled with a species of anguish which she would not, even to herself, avow. The cool lover had not been converted by the marriage ceremony, into the affectionate husband; Major Pierpoint thought too highly of his own merit, to consider his wife's fortune as equal to his deserts. I have already observed, that her avowed attachment rather sunk, than raised her value in his estimation; he was besides a man of fashion, and never from principle wished to be thought more than a genteel, negligent, and civil husband. When the bride found that she could not excite all the envy and wonder she expected, by the splendor of her appearance, and the tender attentions of her universally admired bridegroom, she grew tired of the country, and impatiently wished to enjoy the amusing novelty of the metropolis. She parted from Maria with lively regret; my heroine's feelings were by no means less poignant, but she would not allow herself to indulge the selfish

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concern that militated against her friend's happiness.

Left my readers should think this sacrifice too heroical, I must remind them that it is possible that the expectation of a young Baronet's society, might soften the horrors of solitude, and reconcile her to Everdon after the loss of her friend.

The day after the departure of the newly wedded pair, a note from Mrs. Herbert summoned Mrs. Williams and her daughter to meet her long expected son. Miss Williams had so often listened to long narratives, which extolled his goodness and sense, and were accompanied by the tears of maternal love and anxiety, that she took a great interest in the safety of the person, whom she conceived to be not only one of the worthiest, but most enchanting of men.

It generally happens that the subject of exaggerated praise is injured by the well
meant

meant efforts of its eulogists. Maria felt so disappointed at the appearance of Mr. Herbert, that she could not avoid telling her mother, when they returned, that the good old lady was certainly too partial.

“He may be a worthy man,” said she, “and his long collegiate life proves him, in all probability, a scholar; but as to elegance of person, and gentility of manners, I can scarce think that even maternal fondness can ascribe to him those qualities. His external appearance is barely not disagreeable, and he has a humorous address in his expressions, which though characteristic and entertaining, is exceedingly remote from the elegant polish, which marks the conversation of a gentleman.”

Mrs. Williams, whom friendship induced to favour the son of her beloved Mrs. Herbert, cautioned Maria against hastily deciding on a superficial knowledge.

“ You forget, my dear,” said she, “ that as we are principally indebted to nature for those external advantages which strike at first sight, they must be more evident than those solid virtues which are seated in the soul, and which are only discoverable by a long acquaintance.

In my journey through life, I have seldom found the most pleasing companion convertible into the most estimable friend. Vanity, and a want of stability, often accompany shewy talents. Do not however think, that I mean to insinuate, that worthy people are generally disagreeable; on the other hand, I can strictly assure you, that I have almost always found an excellent heart expressing its benevolence even to strangers, by a captivating loveliness of manners. To distinguish this fine effect of innate goodness, from its sophistical ressembler, polite insincerity, requires a greater share of discriminating knowledge than youth can be expected to possess.”

Maria

Maria perceiving her mother hurt by her reflections on Mr. Herbert, replied, "that she did not in the least mean to impeach his moral excellence, but, on the contrary, that she was inclined to think he had a truly worthy heart."

"So," replied the calm monitress, "charity instructs us to think of all, until we discover the contrary; yet a portion of the serpent's wisdom may be mixed with the dove's simplicity. Of those with whom our commerce is but transient and unimportant, it behoves us to form the most candid judgment; yet while artifice and deceit are so prevalent in the world, we ought (even before we form an intimate connexion with any one) to examine every action, and to applaud no virtue, of whose existence we are doubtful. As this cautious conduct is totally incompatible with a quick decision, we should ever beware of forming hasty conclusions, and habituate our minds to suspect a spontaneous plaudit."

Maria could not accede to her mother's opinion. She was inclined to think that the disappointment Mrs. Williams had formerly sustained, had in this instance affected her usual candour, and to confirm her in the orthodoxy of her own sentiments, that the most agreeable are generally the most estimable, Sir Henry Neville arrived the next day, to present an example of the graces united to the virtues.

C H A P. II.

EVERY thing during the Baronet's absence, had happened exactly according to his wishes. His uncle's dislike to disproportionate

portionate marriages, proved to be not near so violent as he expected; he had even ventured to discover the story of his love; and the passionate description he gave of his charmer's graces, had so wrought upon the good old man, that he had consented to see her, and had promised, in case her merits proved adequate to his expectation, that he would not withhold his consent to his nephew's happiness.

Good fortune seldom comes single; he had had an interview with his adversary, and every thing was in train for a speedy accommodation.

Maria met this full tide of felicity, with all the sanguine warmth and confident hope of lively youth, unpractised in the ways of man, and unconscious of those depressing apprehensions arising from the recollection of past disappointments, which make people of more experience

“Hardly

“ Hardly enjoy the pleasurable taste,

“ Or deem it not sincere, or fear it cannot last.”

PRIOR'S HENRY AND EMMA.

After having a little recovered herself from her first transport of joy, she readily promised to reward him with the gratitude and attachment of all her future life. But in expressing even these pleasing sentiments, she made use of terms no way agreeable to her lover. She talked of principle, virtue and duty, which words he would very gladly have banished from her vocabulary.

Her agitated spirits gradually subsiding, she entertained Sir Henry with a recital of the events which had happened during his absence. Her friend's marriage furnished matter for an ample discussion, and she had just mentioned Mr. Herbert's arrival, when that gentleman entered at the little wicket which I have formerly mentioned, and announced to Sir Henry an unpleasant discovery, that he
was

was no other than his old college acquaintance, and once intimate friend.

The Baronet had but one moment to determine in what manner he should receive him; and as it was impossible to avoid him, he was resolved to meet him with a frank and cordial air.

The first salutation over, Neville asked Herbert, "If he was not surprised to find him in this retired solitude."

"Not at all," answered the other, "I have been absent from England two years; I know the quick transition to which fashion is subject, and conclude that it is now characteristic of the men of the world to worship the echo."

The conversation took a lively turn. Herbert supported his part with a blunt pleasantry, which was agreeably contrasted with the pliant ease of Sir Henry. Indeed the latter
did

did not appear with his usual brilliancy; nor will the reader think me partial in decreeing the palm to the accademic traveller, when it is considered, that he had no designs which he wished to conceal, and the man of the world none, which he chose to discover.

When Mr. Herbert rose and took leave, Sir Henry accompanied him in his walk back to his mother. I have already observed a characteristic frankness in the former gentleman, which, if not a certain proof of integrity, was a strong indication of that manly virtue which acts with full force upon a heart conscious of independance, and glowing with courage and honour.

He had not walked far, before turning to Sir Henry, he asked him to explain an enigma which had very much puzzled him.

“When,” said he, “I first arrived at Everdon, my mother informed me that Miss Williams, of whose merit she spoke enthusiastically,

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tically, was on the eve of marriage with a gentleman of the name of Stanley; how comes it then, that you address her with such marked attentions, and that she receives them with so apparent a satisfaction."

Sir Henry perfectly knew that he had got into hands, which would not be satisfied with half a story; he was therefore forced to own, that he passed in the neighbourhood by a fictitious name.

"I am tormented," said he, "by a cursed dispute with Captain Seymour. His sister, an amorous silly girl, who fancies every man who pays her the casual notices which gallantry requires, is her betrothed husband, has thought proper to wish to fasten on me that honourable appellation. I declare solemnly, Edmund, I never had such a thought. But she has told her tale with such art, that her Quixote brother is enraged against me to that degree, that a temporary retirement is necessary for my safety. I saw no necessity

sity of confiding my history to the boors about me, but Mrs. Williams and her daughter are perfectly acquainted with every particular."

Herbert answered, "I believe you, Sir Henry, when you say that you never thought of marrying Miss Seymour; but can you with equal truth affirm, that your conduct never gave her rational ground to hope that you had such a design. If you cannot say this, you skulk under a mean excuse; it was impossible she should know your thoughts, she could only judge of them by your words and actions."

"There is no necessity," said Neville, "that I should account for mine to you; it is sufficient for my own satisfaction, that I have the acquittal of my own heart."

"But," said Herbert, "your character must suffer in the eyes of the world, and the more so on account of your absenting yourself.

self. I shall with pleasure render you any service in my power; you know I can be cool and determined; shall I wait on Captain Seymour, and bring on an explanation?"

"By no means," interrupted Sir Henry; "there is that captious warmth in his disposition, that he would say I had, by employing you, further exposed his sister's weakness, and would make that a fresh ground of complaint."

Then, enquired the collegian, "What is it that you propose to do?"

"To wait," said Neville, "the effect of time; his regiment is ordered to Gibraltar in a month, and he must join it."

"And shall you rest satisfied with such an exculpation? oh, Sir Harry, does this charming villager fully know the stain that rests upon your honour? pardon my warmth; if you betray her unsuspecting ingenuous mind,
what

what infamy, what horror, must be your portion?"

"You treat me, sir," replied Neville, "with great emotion, in a style to which I am unused. Who dares to whisper a doubt against the honour of my intentions to Maria?"

"There is no other whisper," said Herbert, firmly, "but my knowledge of your past conduct, and the mysterious air of what you have just related."

"I have an arm," returned Sir Henry, "to punish the impertinent tale-bearer, that dares to sow suspicions in a heart, which I have taken such pains to acquire."

"You need not assume that stern look," answered Herbert, "recollect the temper of the man whom you try to intimidate. Though I shall ever carefully avoid profaning, by broils and contentions, the sacred and peaceful

peaceful character which I mean one day to adopt; yet there is an awkward obstinacy in my disposition, which only needs the conviction of right to enforce a steady perseverance in the execution of its designs; and I again assure you, Sir Henry, that if you have dared to form a view injurious to the honour of the young creature, whom you now address, you shall not accomplish it, if it is in my power to prevent you. The world and you may call my interference impertinent, but I feel myself bound to preserve innocence, and detect guilt."

"There was a time," exclaimed Neville, with a deprecatory look, "that I esteemed you my warmest and most valuable friend."

"And never," said Herbert, "did I better deserve that title, than at this moment. I would rescue you from the horrors of remorse, and I would preserve you from an action, which though ruinous in its effects to others, will be most destructive to yourself."

Sir

Sir Henry, who really had as many affairs of honour on his hands, as he well knew how to manage, was not displeased to discover a loop hole, by which he might escape this. He therefore asked Herbert, "if he really thought him villain enough to attempt the seduction of Maria."

"God forbid!" answered Herbert, "you have been licentious and dissipated, but I yet trust that your heart is incapable of such systematic depravity."

"Then," continued Neville, "as you profess yourself my friend, I will freely declare to you, what terror should never have extorted. I feel so disgusted at the recollection of my past pursuits, that I am convinced of the necessity of adopting a different conduct. Maria's excellent principles afford an assurance, that her society will confirm all my resolutions of amendment, and in that hope I am determined to make her my wife."

"Execute

“Execute that determination, and imitate the excellence which you admire,” said Herbert, “and happiness must be your portion. Wherever the world may seek it; it can only be found in the walks of virtue. By the improvement of our moral endowments, we enlarge our capability of enjoyment. On this sublime idea, is formed the most rational and exalted conception of the felicity of a future world. Your pardon, my dear sir; my fondness for theological studies, makes me often deviate into the style of a preacher; but to return to your intended bride. I was uncommonly struck this morning with the tender sensibility and ingenuous pleasure visible in her countenance, when you made a brilliant, or a perspicuous remark. It is evident that she loves you. How did you gain her estimable heart? surely she is above the mean exultation commonly ascribed to her sex, which triumphs in the conquest of a heart, which has been a tyrant to others.”

Neville

Neville owned that there was a delicacy and niceness in Maria's sentiments, which would make him extremely averse to her being informed of his juvenile errors; and as he was fully resolved to renounce them all, he hoped Mr. Herbert would not rob him of the esteem which was to reward his penitence, by an invidious discovery.

That gentleman doubted the rectitude of this injunction, which would cause him to withhold from an inexperienced young woman, the information necessary to her peace, and which it was impossible for her intuitively to know: in his opinion it seemed much like that cruelty, which suffers a blind person to fall down a precipice, without having previously informed him, that he stood on its extreme verge. Unwilling, however, to do a mean and ungenerous action, to a man who placed a confidence in him, he resolved to wait the effect of this expostulation, and answered in general terms, that he would not be guilty of any thing base; and he concluded

ed with expressing a wish, that time might prove the stability of Sir Henry's virtuous resolutions. They separated reciprocally dissatisfied, and determined to watch each other's conduct.

C H A P. III.

ONE mark that the human soul still retains somewhat of its original purity, is the necessity which vice finds to adopt disguises even to itself. The practised villain shudders at the plain narrative of his own crimes; nor is the deceitful sophistry of sin more evident in discovering motives to engage us in iniquity, than in dressing the

offence in the softest terms. Nothing has contributed to increase the licentiousness which is but too visible in the manners of the world, more than the soothing epithets which folly and levity have made it customary to bestow on immorality. The irreligious infidel is complimented with the character of freedom and liberality of sentiment; the incontinent profligacy of the libertine is softened into the venal error of youth, and prodigality is excused by the pitiable complaint, that the gentleman's fortune was not equal to his mind.

When virtue loses its abhorrence of vice, she dismisses one of her most vigilant guards. Let but self-interest surmount principle, and her ruin is compleat. I was led into these reflections, by considering the motives which induced Sir Henry Neville to add to his other crimes, the guilt of deliberate and malicious falsehood.

As

As jealousy must be the inseparable companion of love in the breast of a libertine, that gentleman's mind, destitute of the candour of virtue, could ascribe no other motive for Herbert's warm interference, than the seducing prevalence of Maria's charms. He had answered him so very equivocally when he strove to extort a promise of secrecy, that he was resolved to think that he meant to supplant him by avowing his knowledge of his former conduct. It was necessary therefore to ward off this fatal blow; and if truth would not assist in his defence, he might borrow aid from fiction, or in the vulgar home-spun dialect, tell a lie. He persuaded himself that it was justifiable by the same reasons, which exculpate a man who commits homicide in his own defence.

As to his ultimate design respecting Maria, he did not like to probe his heart on that subject. He loved her to desperation; to lose her was impossible; if his other schemes did not succeed, he would marry her; yes,

marry her; where was the impropriety of terminating in honour, a courtship that was commenced in fraud. Romantic love would think the strictest connexion with its intended deceiver, a fit reward for the purity of its wishes, and the constancy of its attachment.

Determined to prosecute a design, the success of which appeared evident, Neville resolved to invalidate Herbert's evidence, by prepossessing Maria with the strongest abhorrence of his character. He represented him to her as one of those extraordinary productions of nature, that conceal, under the appearance of superior goodness, an unusual share of depravity. He dwelt particularly on his licentious pursuits, violent passions, and masterly dissimulation.

Maria's chief fault was pliancy of temper, which credulously received every impression from the sentiments of those she loved. She pitied the worthy Mrs. Herbert indeed, for placing such unbounded tenderness on, such

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a consummate hypocrite ; but her love for that lady did not prevent her from entertaining the same abhorrence and detestation against her son, which she had long felt for the rival of her dear Charlotte, Miss Mandeville. Nor did she need her lover's persuasion to determine, that she would avoid Herbert with the same care that she would a wild inhabitant of the forest.

As Sir Henry knew that it would be impossible to introduce his uncle, which was the next step he proposed, during Herbert's stay at Everdon, he chose, by absence, to avoid those interviews, to which he found even his superlative deception unequal. He trusted to Maria's aversion, and the constraint which she already shewed, when in company with that gentleman, to prevent any ill effects of his dreaded knight errantry. He took leave of Maria under the pretext of prosecuting his plan of bringing his uncle to visit her.

To Mr. Herbert he held out another reason; it was his design, he said, to reconcile himself to Captain Seymour, which if he could happily accomplish, he promised he would immediately return, and give his hand to the charming villager, as they both called her.

In spite of his fair promises, suspicions of the most anxious kind lurked in Mr. Herbert's soul. He frequently conversed with his mother on the subject, but all that he could learn from her was, that though Mrs. Williams did not entirely approve of, Maria's affections were irrevocably fixed. He perceived her anxious parent often threw on him glances, strongly expressive of the curiosity which it was natural to feel, respecting the person on whom the future peace of her beloved child must entirely depend.

He wished not to sow the seeds of discord, and Maria's manner was so constrained and distant, so different from the candour and affability

affability that was conspicuous in their first interviews, that as he was unconscious of offending her, he could not ascribe the alteration to any cause but caprice. Distracted how to act, but feeling his interest in her cause hourly increasing, he determined, if possible, to bring on an explanation.

A few days after Sir Henry's departure, Maria went one morning to call on Mrs. Herbert, who was indisposed. The anxious Edmund seized the opportunity of escorting her home, to inquire in what he had displeased her? Maria very ingenuously replied, in nothing.

Mr. Herbert answered, "I am delighted to hear you acquit me. Since I first saw you, I have anxiously, but respectfully wished to gain the honour of your esteem; yet when I ventured to address you in the style of confidence, I fancied that I discovered a degree of displeasure and reserve in your countenance; and though my heart acquitted me of design-

ed offence, I feared that I had been guilty of some inadvertent fault."

Maria called to mind all the cautionary suspicions which Sir Henry had suggested; and fearing to converse with a man who would turn her most innocent expressions into some malicious meaning, was silent.

"Will you, Miss Williams," continued Herbert, "instruct me in the happy art of pleasing. We academics are too apt to prosecute the severer studies, at the expence of those graceful proprieties which ornament society. Excluded from the conversation of your sex, our attempts at politeness are at best but awkward imitations. Can you propose to me any model, by copying of which I shall grow agreeable to those fair judges whom I am solicitous to please."

As he spoke this with an arch look, Maria laughed at the implied raillery; but her apprehensions

prehenſions ſoon returned, and ſhe reſumed her former gravity.

“ Do not miſconceive me,” proceeded Herbert, “ I know Sir Henry Neville is juſtly entitled to the poſſeſſion of your heart. He has many pleaſing qualities; I admire his addreſs, information and generoſity. But ſure, if I yield him the unconteſted poſſeſſion of your love, you may think ſuch a ſacrifice not undeſerving ſome reward, and all I aſk is your friendſhip.”

Maria’s love was too innocent and too ſincere to need the diſguiſe of concealment. She replied, bluſhing, “ that Sir Henry’s friend had an undoubted right to her good opinion.”

“ And may I, without being accuſed of impertinence, aſk, when will my friend’s happineſs and virtue be confirmed by an union with you.”

She answered, "that they waited for the sanction of Sir Henry's uncle."

"His uncle!" interrogated Herbert, with an astonished look.

Little as Maria had said, she trembled with fear, lest she had proceeded too far, and anticipated an invidious design in Herbert, to transmit to the old gentleman some malicious representation of her, which would render all poor Sir Henry's designs abortive, even at the moment of their expected completion. But recollecting that so intimate an acquaintance must know all his connexions, she answered, "Yes, his uncle. Sir Henry is now gone to solicit his permission."

"I could have sworn," exclaimed Herbert, "that he had no such near relation; I have known him these ten years, and never heard him mention such a one."

"You

"You forget," answered Maria, "it is his mother's brother, an infirm old man, who has adopted him for his heir."

In the mind of Mr. Herbert, the polished virtues were but secondary qualities. He thought it right rather to break the laws of good breeding, than to trespass against probity. Though this blunt habit frequently displeased the fine gentlemen of his acquaintance, it secured him the esteem of the discerning few, who know how to value integrity and truth. He vehemently assured her that it was false; he knew Lady Neville had no brother; she was an heiress; and Sir Henry inherited most of his present possessions from his mother's family.

The alarm which Miss Williams felt, was extreme. She doubted Neville's veracity, but in an instant abandoned the unpleasing apprehension. It was ungenerous to suspect him only on the testimony of a consummate hypocrite. With pleasure she perceived her-

self near her mother's, and hurried on to terminate the conversation.

Her escort, no less agitated than herself, eagerly asked her, "if Sir Henry had himself told her of this fictitious relation."

Unwilling to hear the man of her heart accused of falsity, and incapable of speaking one herself, she made no answer.

"Oh, Miss Williams!" said Herbert, "Why do you preserve this obstinate silence; it is agonizing to me, but fatal to yourself. I would serve you even with my life—you know not the character of the man in whom you confide."

At this undisguised attack, Maria's resentment rose to its extremest height.

"At least," said she, "I know the character of his traducer. If, sir, calumny is the effect of your friendship, I renounce it;
I see

I see your treacherous purpose; yet will I be too generous to betray you to your mother, or to rob her of the delusive idea, that her son deserves her esteem."

Sorry I am to observe, that though Mr. Herbert possessed many exalted virtues, he yet fell short of perfection. There was too much warmth in his temper; and Maria's accusation had touched the master spring which set it at work. His veneration for sincerity and truth was enthusiastic, and she had accused him of treachery. It was evident she had been prejudiced in his disfavour; but his resentment at the undeserved reproach was too vehement to allow him to pity her delusion. He would have replied; but finding he could not command his passion sufficiently to bring his words within the bounds of politeness, he suddenly wished her a good morning, and withdrew.

Left to reflection, Maria soon became sensible of an impropriety in her conduct; and
though

though she still resolved to confide in Neville's veracity, and to suppress every suspicion, she had no sooner rejected one, than another rose, and in infinite succession crowded upon her mind. Was it probable that Mr. Herbert, however malevolent his designs might be, would affirm a falsehood that could instantly be disproved. An attack upon Sir Henry's character might have been made by a thousand preferable methods; yet again if he spoke true, her idolized Neville must have fabricated a deliberate lie. No virtue, however splendid, could in her idea preponderate against so black a charge. Perplexed in the extreme, she resolved to write to Mrs. Pierpoint, to disclose the secret which she had hitherto so closely concealed, and to conjure her, by their former friendship, to make the most minute enquiries after the character of Sir Henry Neville, and in particular to certify the reality of his uncle's existence. Until she received an answer, she chose to conceal from her mother the purport of her conversation with Mr. Herbert.

Herbert. She knew Mrs. Williams entertained an high opinion of that gentleman, and she felt unwilling to enter into any painful discussions.

Edmund's mind was yet more violently agitated. He perceived that the rash impetuosity of his temper had destroyed the good effects which his honest heart had laboured to attain. Maria's confidence in Neville was confirmed, and her dislike to himself aggravated to abhorrence. His mind was too generous long to retain the sullen quality of resentment; and his anger against the credulous and partial girl, soon softened into the liveliest pity. "What step should he take? should he communicate to Mrs. Williams the deceitful artifices of her daughter's lover?" it was evident by that lady's dejected anxious look, and the tears which frequently started into her eyes, that her suspicion was already roused, and that she lamented her child's insensibility to danger. "Of what avail then was it, to increase her fears

fears and uneasiness?" Sometimes he determined to apply to his mother, and urge her to persuade Maria to doubt the honour of her lover; but he was checked by reflecting, that as all her information must avowedly be derived from him, her advice would carry with it no weight, but would be rejected as the second effort of malice and treachery.

Perceiving his presence was of no service at Everdon, he resolved to go to town, and endeavour to discover the ground of dispute between Sir H. and Captain Seymour.

CHAP. IV.

THE very morning Mr. Herbert set out on his expedition, Mrs. Williams, who placed the most implicit confidence in his honour, arrived at his mother's. Determined to intrust him with the suspicions which she entertained of Sir Henry's real designs, and to discover his sentiments of the principles and character of his friend. Her disappointment at Herbert's departure was extreme; she condemned herself exceedingly, for permitting the favourable opportunities that had before occurred, of knowing his opinions, to escape unimproved; but whilst she

she was endeavouring to form other plans, the desired ecclaircissement took place, by a method which she little expected, I mean, by Maria's receiving the following epistle from Mrs. Pierpoint.

“ I am concerned, my dear Maria, to inform you, that Sir Henry's character does not, upon enquiry, fully answer the expectations which we had formed. I must confess, I never was so deceived in my life; I thought him possessed of every exalted virtue. I received your's just as I was stepping into my chariot, to pay a morning call to Lady Jane Bellmour. She is quite the woman of fashion, and as we are very intimate, I determined to commence my inquiries with her, and to engage her to be sincere in her account; I swore her to secrecy, and then told her your whole story. Her ladyship seemed delighted with the narrative, and assured me at the conclusion, that Neville was a divine fellow. All girls,” said she, “ are dying for him, and that married lady
is

is happy, who can get him for her cicisbeo; but let your friend take care, that she holds him fast, for he is too agreeable a creature to be constant."

" Though this account was very pleasing, I determined not to rest entirely upon her evidence, in an affair of such importance. I went that night to the Duchefs of R——'s rout, and there I declined taking a card, on purpose that I might prosecute my inquiries. I had applied to every one that I thought was capable of giving me information; when Lady Jane pulling my arm, whispered, that if I wanted very circumspect intelligence, Captain Seymour, who just then entered the room, could satisfy me. I did not suspect her ladyship was in a spiteful humour, for she is at times malicious, though on the whole, one of the most agreeable companions I ever knew; and as I was slightly acquainted with the Captain, I endeavoured to draw him into conversation, and after several questions, I asked

asked him in an easy manner, if he knew Sir Henry Neville.

“ I yet tremble, Maria, at the idea of his countenance ; it was furious beyond description.”

“ Do you mean to insult me, madam,” said he, in a voice which rage rendered inarticulate.

Quite terrified, I assured him, “ that I was ignorant of any reason that could convert that question into an offence. I added, that that gentleman was on the eve of marriage with a friend of mine, and that was my sole motive for asking information.”

“ This, madam,” said he, “ is not a proper place for explanation. I will do myself the honour of waiting upon you to-morrow.”

He left the room immediately after ; I was ready to faint through confusion. Some laughed,

laughed, others blamed, others pitied me; I could not help being very angry with Lady Jane, for betraying me into an error; but she is so much the ton, that I shall not break off our acquaintance. I was so much affected, that I could not go to Lady Twaddle's petit soupre, where I was engaged, but returned home directly.

I did not dare to tell Mr. Pierpoint a word of what had passed. He is perpetually chiding me for my awkwardisms and vulgarities. He would, I know, have laid all the blame entirely upon me; fortunately he was not at home when Captain Seymour called. He made a genteel apology for his peremptory manner the preceding evening, and was pleased to say he was certain I had not been informed of what had passed between his family and the villain Neville (such were his shocking words.) "I now come, madam," said he, "to request a favour, for which your friend shall find me grateful; it is to wait upon the lady myself. The narrative I have to communicate,

communicate, is not of a nature to bear frequent repetitions."

If I had refused, I fancied that he might have thought me ashamed of you; I therefore gave him your direction. Since I have done so, I am apprehensive I was wrong. My letter will, however, prevent your being surprised at the appearance of a visitor, whom from the precipitancy of his manner, you may soon expect.

I find that some story about his sister and your Sir Henry, had been greatly talked of, before I came to town; but as it is now buried under new wonders, nobody cares to revive it. Lady Twaddle declares, that the Captain is a terrible revengeful fellow, and that the Baronet only acted as any young man of pleasure would have done. So you see there are two opinions about him; and if I was to advise you, I would enquire no further, but if possible, marry him before Captain Seymour comes. That you know must

terminate their quarrel, as his sister could have no further hope; and I more strongly advise you to do so, as I am positively assured that he has no relation in the world, on whom he is in the least dependant; but is the untrouled master of a monstrous fortune; so it will be an amazing good match.

I do not find town quite so agreeable as I expected. This, my dear, is a strange world, I am almost tired of it. In London one has nothing but amusements, 'till one is sick of them, and giddy from their quick succession; and in the country one is dying of the vapours for want of a single diversion. You know I had used to check you for your philosophizing humour, and tell you it was splenetic; yet I now give way to it myself, and I often wish for a plan of life, I hardly know how to describe. I wish you would marry Sir Henry, and come to town, I think then I should be happy.

CHARLOTTE PIERPOINT.

Three

Three times did Maria peruse this letter ; but it was still the same. “ The villain Neville,” and, “ he has no relation in the world on whom he is in the least dependant,” every time met her startled thought. In agony unspeakable she clasped her hands, and raised her wild streaming eyes to heaven.

Mrs. Williams had ever, on the pressure of any great affliction, accustomed herself to a practice, which she found very productive of resignation and patience. Instead of permitting her mind to dwell on those relative appendants that aggravate distress into desperation, by a vigorous exertion of her powers, she turned her mental eye on those alleviating circumstances, which Providence kindly allows in every condition of misery, could we but permit ourselves to see them. She had strongly recommended this practice to her daughter ; and as good habits improve into virtues, Maria, accustomed to this happy self-command in trivial instances, preserved her
natural

ADVANTAGES OF EDUCATION.

natural sweetness of temper unimpaired, and laid the foundation of submission and fortitude.

If a wet morning prevented an agreeable party, Maria forgot her own disappointment, by thinking of the benefit which the husbandman would derive from the salutary showers; and when her satin gown was, through mistake, so spoiled in dying, that it was unfit for herself, she was still pleased with the thought, that Betty, her maid, would be happy in having it for a Sunday dress.

My readers must not despise these trivial particulars; it cannot be too often inculcated, that the neglect of those little humble duties, which many contemptuously refuse to admit into the family of the virtues, leads to serious habits of error. Providence is not always calling us forth to great exertions, either of positive or negative duties; in what then consists that life of continual warfare which we are commanded to lead? every hour we ought to be amiable and worthy; but our opportunities

tunities of performing exalted acts of goodness, may not, even in the course of our lives, repeatedly occur. The often neglected, but highly important preparatory duties, may be compared to the military exercises which are practised in times of peace. The soldier, who does not make himself master of these introductory evolutions, can never acquit himself with honour in the day of battle.

Maria found, that the habit which she had adopted in the small disasters of her formerly tranquil life, extremely serviceable at this bitter moment, when she was visited by an affliction most poignantly felt by amiable minds, the unworthiness of the man she loved. Yet though busy in finding out consolation, she could only cling to one idea for support.

“ Thank God !” said she, “ I have not, by artifice or disobedience, forfeited the love of my kind indulgent mother. She will soothe her poor deluded girl, and think her
yet

yet more endeared by her distress. Her love and pity will be my solace; her excellent judgment, my guide. She is too good to condemn me for wanting that caution which my years and inexperience did not allow; and I shall learn of her, fortitude and prudence to direct me through this world, and pious resignation, to guide me to a better."

Saying this, she resolved to find her mother, and meeting her entering into the room, she flung herself into her arms.

"My dearest child," exclaimed the terrified parent, "Why this severe distress?"

"Alas," answered Maria, "Sir Henry has deceived me!" she could say no more, but held out Mrs. Pierpoint's letter, which while Mrs. Williams was reading it, she leaned against the window, and found some relief in a plentiful flow of tears.

The good mother read the confirmation of her fears with pleasure, rather than surprise; and 'ere she addressed her daughter, breathed a silent ejaculation of gratitude to Providence, that the deception of the intended betrayer was become apparent to the unsuspecting victim.

Miss Williams having again recovered her speech, gave way to all the frenzied exclamations of abhorrence, which, though the mourner who utters them is at the time sincere, are always known by those who hear them, to be indicative of the strongest attachment.

Anxious that reason should remove the partial affection which juvenile indiscretion had introduced, Mrs. Williams affected to become a mediator for the Baronet. She told Maria, that as she had indulged her fancy by creating imaginary virtues, 'till the ideal idol soared above humanity, so now she distressed herself by taking crimes for granted, which

which still in some degree wanted confirmation.

“ You must remember,” said she, “ that this severe word, *villain*, is spoken by an enemy, and I should think, by his behaviour to Mrs. Pierpoint, a revengeful and passionate one. The only fault which seems clearly proved, is, that he deceived us by a fictitious tale.”

“ And can my mother,” said Maria, “ so far forget the purity of her morals, as to use the palliative only, when she speaks of a lie? why did he tell it me? that question leads to a yet more horrid discovery. If it is possible, if he indeed meant to practise against my honour, let poverty and misery be my portion without him. Never shall affluence and felicity court me to his nuptials. Nay, did he entreat my pardon, and in the most solemn manner attest his penitence, I would abjure and hate him.”

Mrs. Williams, though sensible that her daughter's energetic expressions were but like the false strength that attends a delirium, was yet pleased with sentiments indicative of mental rectitude. She applauded her resolution, and strengthened it by observing, that marriage with a man whom we ceased to esteem, was a horrid act of solemn perjury.

"Guilt," said she, "is often so atrocious as to suppose that the innocence which it fails to subvert, ought to be its reward; but a woman possessed of moral principle, I should use a higher term, of religious hope, will be cautious how she risks sentiments to herself so dear, by a permanent connexion with one, who proves himself the enemy of virtue. If she can so far forgive her intended seducer, as to marry him, the world may justly attribute her resistance to pride and cunning, rather than to virgin purity; but I will yet hope, that Sir Henry had no such design."

At

At this instant a gentleman's servant stopped at the gate, he brought Captain Seymour's compliments, and announced that he would wait on the ladies that morning, upon some important business.

Maria trembling and agitated in the extreme, caught hold of her mother's arm, and entreated that she might be absent from the dreaded explanation.

Mrs. Williams strongly advised her to stay; "Oh," said Maria, "I shall discover all my folly by my confusion."

"More unfavourable conclusions, my dear," replied the mother, "may be deduced from your absence; it may be inferred that you are absolutely bent against conviction. And why should you blush at discovering your susceptibility for a man, with whom Captain Seymour knows that you intended to form the strictest tie. Summon your fortitude; I will be with

you, and assist you to the utmost of my abilities. Remember, it is you that must judge; and it is only by hearing Captain Seymour yourself, that you can ascertain the validity of his testimony."

Thus encouraged, Maria endeavoured to collect her presence of mind, and in a few moments the gentleman appeared.

CHAP. V.

CAPTAIN Seymour discovered at his entrance a haughty superciliousness, which seemed the result of fancied superiority. It was considerably diminished by the genteel

genteel dignity of Mrs. Williams's manner, who perceiving that he hesitated in what way to begin, informed him, that Mrs. Pierpoint had announced the purpose of his friendly visit, and that they depended on his sincerity as a gentleman, and his honour as a foldier.

“ When I confider, ladies,” said the Captain, “ that you are probably pre-poffeffed in favour of the person whom I mean to accufe, there feems a degree of romantic improbability in my prefent undertaking; but when you find that truth extorts from me the difclofure of a fifters difgrace, my veracity muft be unimpeached.”

“ If,” replied Maria, (a blufh of generous fhame glowing upon her countenance) “ you mean to infer from my known attachment to Sir Henry Nevill, that I am obftinately bent againft conviction, I muft affirm, fir, that you charge me with a determined error, of which I am incapable. My efteem for him only exifts while he appears to de-

serve it. Remove that confidence, and it ceases."

Our officer, who from his knowledge of Mrs. Pierpoint, had formed no very high idea of her friend, was at a loss to discover, in the preceding speech, that romantic fondness and conceited ignorance which his expectations had associated with the rural beauty. On the contrary, he found himself compelled to admire the justness of her sentiments, and the composed propriety of her behaviour.

After a sigh, which seemed with great reluctance to force its way, he addressed Mrs. Williams in the following words.

"I had a sister, madam, innocent once, and lovely as your daughter. For three years Neville endeavoured, by the most persevering assiduity, to convince her of his love. We did not ask the nature of his addresses, though her fortune was far inferior to his, yet her family connexions and rank in life

life seemed to stamp such monstrous arrogance on a plan of dishonour, that we formed no apprehensions of his infernal design. During great part of the time whilst I was with my company on garrison duty at Gibraltar, every account which I received from England, I fancied would contain the intelligence of Eliza's nuptials. Judge then my horror, my inconceivable astonishment, when last April a letter from my widowed mother, almost unintelligible with tears, contained the soul-harrowing tidings, that the unworthy girl had yielded to her seducer's arts; had eloped from her family, nay, lived with him in the contemptible character of his mistress."

The glow which had hitherto illumined Maria's cheek, turned at these words to a dying paleness. Her mother, fearful that she would faint, led her to the window. The air soon recovered her; for the feelings which overcame her spirits were not selfish. Her first words were, "Poor young lady, how I pity her!"

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“ You pity her, madam,” cried Seymour, “ my feelings are of a different kind. Little did I think that I should live to hear my sister mentioned as an object of pity.”

“ Your sense of honour, I perceive, is painfully accute,” said Mrs. Williams, “ we do not wish to wound it. Be pleased, sir, to pursue your narrative; my daughter is recovered, and will listen with composure.”

“ There is little to add,” replied the haughty son of Mars, “ but my own ineffectual endeavours to revenge Eliza. The fear of my vengeance has hunted the coward from society. I know not his hiding place, but I stay in England with the fixed resolution to discover him. He shall not boast with impunity, that he made my sister his harlot.”

“ But,” enquired Maria, with compassionate solicitude, “ where is Miss Seymour now ?”

“ Possession,”

"Possession," answered the Captain, "soon satiated her seducer's love, even before I could return to England. She has gained my mother's forgiveness, and is gone into the country, from whence she frequently writes to me. Her penitence and sorrow have deeply affected her health; she entreats me to pardon her, and wishes to see me, but I cannot yield to such a meeting, 'till I have revenged her injured honour on Neville."

"And does she," said Maria, "approve of your sanguinary purposes?"

"She has all the easiness of her sex," replied the brother, "and is, I doubt not, ready to forgive him; but if I do, may I perish—I live but to punish him, and if his heart's blood does but glut my sword, I care not if mine flows the next instant,"

His countenance, as he spoke these words, assumed a more than savage ferocity. Maria, terrified at the fury of his aspect, no less than
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at his words, exclaimed, "Oh! surely, sir, you are too vindictive!"

"I thought, madam," said he, "you had firmness sufficient to withdraw your esteem from a person whom I have proved unworthy of it."

"I have," returned Maria. "To the injured Miss Seymour," continued she, with lifted eyes and hands, "I resign every claim, every pretension to Sir Henry Neville. For millions of worlds I would not now be his. But is there no compassion, no charity due to a guilty wretch, who is highly unfit to be plunged into eternity?"

"I do not," answered the Captain, "often trouble myself with these considerations; or I might ask, if charity requires me to let him live, to practise on others the same arts which have undone my Eliza."

Agonized

Agonized to the extreme, Miss Williams again attempted to reply, when her mother pitying her distress, and being sensible that her interposition did but increase the resentment which she wished to moderate, entreated her to retire. As she left the room, she cast on her mother an energetic look of supplication, which, with a pathos beyond what words could effect, solicited her to try to save him.

Mrs. Williams was an adept in that species of eloquence, which compliments the person whom we address, with the possession of the virtues we wish them to practise. Adopting this delicate mode of reproof, she commended his high sense of honour and fraternal tenderness, and expressed her own detestation of Neville so warmly, that Seymour became convinced that she never would consent to an union between him and Maria, and expressed his sentiments to that purpose.

“ Did

“ Did I not,” said Mrs. Williams, “ largely allow for the perplexing anxiety of distress like your’s, I should feel offended at your supposing a possibility that Maria should forget what she owes to her sex, her character, and her future peace. At present my mind is fully engrossed by your sorrows, and those of your sister. What must be her anguish, when she reflects, that she has not only degraded your family, but that the means of reinstating its honour, involves the safety of her only protector, who ~~should~~ have supplied the place of her lost father, to herself and to her widowed mother? how must she wish that a less violent method could have been discovered?”

“ There cannot be any other,” interrupted the Captain.

“ I grieve to hear you say so,” returned the lady, “ you doubtless would not have adopted this, without the minutest investigation. You have examined every satisfaction which

which law could extort, or penitence offer, and found them all inadequate. It is hard indeed;—allow me to anticipate your mother's agony; when to the wretchedness of a beloved daughter, the violent death, or necessary banishment of a beloved son, her only remaining hope, is added."

"These," said Seymour, "are the sacrifices which honour require. Life alone would be too small a purchase for the inestimable blessing of untainted fame. The anguish of our near connexions must enhance its price, and heighten its value."

"Such sentiments I have always supposed, lived in the bosoms of duelists; and yet," continued Mrs. Williams, "I have often rejoiced that their brave spirits were beyond the reach of this world's censure or applause, when I have heard reflexions thrown out against the merit of those who perished in single combat."

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"Cowards," replied Seymour, "are great admirers of those statutes which render it criminal in injured merit to resent infamy or insolence. I doubt not but Neville can expatiate very floridly on the illegality of my purposes."

"The arguments which my friends pursued," said Mrs. Williams, "were different. Will you excuse me if I repeat their sentiments? they ridiculed the folly of innocence placing itself on a level with guilt, nay, in more eminent danger, as the challenger generally declines the first fire. They urged the absurdity of calling this redress of injuries. It only published the depravity of the wife, or the imprudence of the sister, which was before perhaps disputable, announced the folly as well as the rashness of the losing gamester, and stamped authenticity on a lie, that would be otherwise only repeated and forgotten. 'Till the world," said a gentleman of my acquaintance, "grows candid, I will never entrust it with my injuries; nor will

will I apply to chance for redress, 'till I know that Providence has deputed her to perform that office. I will take a nobler revenge. The villain that has wronged me, shall live to endure the stings of conscience, and the neglect of mankind, who are ever ready to take the part of those who seem least vindictive; and the mortification of knowing that I have discovered and despise him. As he shall be well assured that I will never give him an opportunity of acquiring praise by a public display of false courage, he shall have his present anguish increased by a loathsome prospect of protracted life, bending under the pangs of contempt, remorse, and infamy."

Captain Seymour was deeply attentive to Mrs. Williams. The rage which inflamed his countenance gradually softened into that melancholy gloom, to which it had long been accustomed. Oppressed by a variety of passions, to which he was unable to give utterance, he bowed, and silently withdrew.

CHAP.

C H A P. VI.

THE moment he was gone, Maria rushed into the room. "Have you prevailed," said she, "will he permit him to live?"

"I trust," replied the afflicted mother, "that my persuasions have not been wholly ineffectual. But Maria, why thus dreadfully anxious for one whom you have abjured for ever?"

"If Captain Seymour will spare his life," answered Maria, "I shall soon recover my peace

peace of mind. His crimes, which have excited my abhorrence, increase my alarm for his safety. Is he fit to plunge into eternity? oh, madam! my resentment does not pursue him to a future state; I would have him live to repent. You look at me with suspicious terror. Come, then, try my resolution, I will forbid him my sight for ever: you shall write, but I will dictate."

"Agreed, my love," said Mrs. Williams, "only on one condition, that your style shall be more firm than passionate; that your refusal may appear the result of principle and reason, rather than disappointed affection."

"Let it be expressive of both," said Maria, "why should I disguise sentiments in which I suspected no harm." Mrs. Williams then, by her directions, wrote as follows.

"Sir,

Artifice, when discovered, excites abhorrence proportionate to the confidence which

it has injured. I hold the pen for Maria, who proud of decent independance, abjures the splendor that allured but to betray; and protests that she never will behold you more. Though tendernefs and esteem have subsided with the imaginary merit on which they were founded; yet pity for a man who has stooped to depravity and fraud, compels her to inform you, that regard for your personal safety must deter you from coming to Everdon. Captain Seymour waits in its vicinity.

AMELIA WILLIAMS.

After this letter was dispatched by a special messenger, Maria retired, as she assured her mother, to sleep, but in reality to spend a tedious night, in musing on disappointments, which if not the most severe human nature can sustain, are the most depressing, by happening at a period, when the heart is more peculiarly alive to sensibility.

Equally

Equally tedious and gloomy did the night appear to Mrs. Williams, in whose mind the maternal fervour glowed so intensely, that she never could behold even the imaginary troubles of her daughter, without a kind participation. Well might a real affliction like the present, excite the tenderest sympathy, and the most active attention.

Maria bent under the feelings of love, grief, and resentment, with all the delicacy and elegance of a broken lily. Ashamed to discover her sensibility for a villain, she disdained complaint, and assumed a shew of ease, which an idiot might have discovered to have been affected. Incapable of wilful deceit in her conduct with others, but extremely apt to delude herself with unfounded expectations, she fancied her uneasiness wholly ascribable to Neville's danger, and doubted not but the return of the messenger would restore her tranquillity, if it did but confirm the probability of his safety.

In two days he returned; the intelligence he brought was however very vague and inconclusive. Sir Henry, whom he had seen, sent no answer. Much to the astonishment of Maria, he found Herbert with the Baronet, and from him she received the following epistle.

‘ I will use my utmost endeavours to prevent Sir Henry from returning to Everdon, and I trust I shall be able to preserve him from a rencountre with Captain Seymour. May I hope that Miss Williams will forgive the warmth which I injudiciously expressed the last time I had the happiness of conversing with her, and that she will accept the faithful services of her sincere friend,

EDMUND HERBERT.

Though her asperity to Mr. Herbert was much softened, her mind had been too unaccustomed to violent transitions, from hate

to esteem, to allow her to place implicit confidence in his assurances.

Her mother indeed encouraged her to rely on the steady truth of a man, who in every past transaction of his life, had evinced the strictest integrity.

"When a lad," said she, "he was the soul of honour, and though no ways deficient in agreeable vivacity, was never hurried by the flow of juvenile spirits, into any action which seemed to border upon trick and artifice. Indeed this honesty seemed in him scarce a virtue, as there was an impetuosity in his temper which rendered disguise impossible."

"How different," replied Maria, "is this character, from what Neville described him to be, a dangerous master of the deepest arts of dissimulation. I do not controvert your opinion; but how dreadful is it for me to reflect that my warm, imprudent, and un-

discerning heart preferred the man, whose conversation was a continual insult to truth."

"And how grateful," said Mrs. Williams, "should you be to Providence, that it discovered your error, before it was impossible for you to retract it."

Maria, with unaffected piety, acknowledged the interposition of an all-seeing and merciful power. "But," added she, "regret for my folly must sadden all my future prospects."

"Had you obstinately persisted against conviction, or madly sacrificed the priorities of duty to the supposed obligations of love," returned the mother, "I must confess your views would have been clouded by the painful gloom of self-accusation. Though not wholly free from error, your faults, my child, are only the venial indiscretions of youth. Experience teaches distrust and suspicion; but I always conclude, that somewhat

what depraved lurks in the youthful heart, in which they spontaneously grow."

Though these soothing consolations were often repeated, Mrs. Williams still continued unable to reconcile Maria to herself. Her health visibly declined beneath the pressure of mental misery; and her faded cheek and hollow eye gave fresh alarm to her mother. "Gracious heaven!" she used to say to herself, "have I been unthankful to thee for this precious child; or negligent in my duty to her, that thus thou threatenest to resume her. Perhaps my offence is of a different kind; the gift has engrossed my heart, and made me inattentive to the giver. I feel that I deserve correction in this particular, yet do not inflict it without supplying me with the consolatory aid of fortitude and resignation!"

Struggling to disguise her own distress and anxiety, as it ever was her custom, Mrs. Williams affected to conceal her conscious-

ness of Maria's indisposition, well knowing, that as it originated in depressed spirits, any apparent alarm on her side would but increase the cause of the evil, against which she wished to guard. She perceived with the greatest concern, that a habit of listless indolence superseded those customs of industry, which formerly distinguished Maria's active life. If she prevailed on her to walk in the garden, and applied to her for her opinion in the arrangement of the flowers, it was given with the air of a person, who wished not to see the produce. Her work was thrown aside; her paintings lay unfinished; she read indeed whenever she was requested, but the volume was restored to its place in the book-case, without its accustomed remark. Even charity but coldly interested her tender and benevolent heart; or rather the spring of her mind was so broken, that she wanted spirits to prevail upon herself to make the exertions necessary for the revival of those transports, which she once so forcibly felt. She imagined that she should never know
happiness

happiness more, and to think so, is to renounce it.

Her favourite amusement was to look at Nelly Waters, who still continued spinning to support her grandmother; and at the same time sang some melancholy ditty, applicable to her lover's absence.

Maria continually opposed this girl's heroism to her own weakness; and the contrast ended in several bitter reflections.

"Did this young woman," said she, "without any other incitement than uneducated goodness, resign the worthy object of her love to support a parent, and to fulfil the ties of gratitude; and shall I, who have been instructed in those nicer sentiments which ought to produce more elevated virtue, repine at my necessary resignation of a villain?"

The poignancy of this reflection daily increased. Hitherto it served for no other purpose

pose than to embitter the distress which it ought to have diminished. Maria, though truly candid to others, preserved, in every thing relative to her own conduct, a strict severity that reprobated with abhorrence every appearance of wrong. But it often happens, that those who possess this nicety of sentiment in too great a degree, fall into a new error while lamenting the past. Thus it fared with my heroine; her resentment against herself for having been the dupe of Neville, wholly occupied her mind, and rendered her inattentive to the painful anxiety which her unhappiness excited in her mother.

CHAP,

CHAP. VI.

WHEN we indulge in a cavilling humour, and complain of the scanty portion of happiness that Providence permits us to enjoy, we do not allow ourselves to consider how large a share of human misery originates from the disorders of our passions. My young readers are, in the character of Maria, presented with an instance of great goodness of heart, and purity of intention; yet the sufferings under which she appeared to sink in the last chapter, cannot be ascribable to any peculiar infliction of heaven, but

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rather to the extreme indulgence of love and grief. These are the passions most fatal to the tranquillity of youth. Volumes have been written to prove their fatal effects, yet until the lessons of instruction prove as forcible as the convictions of experience, we must leave them to be taught moderation, by the pain and inconveniencies which vehemence produces.

Filial piety, though it has for some time appeared a dormant quality, was the happy means of awakening in Maria's mind, those sentiments, which terminated in vigorous exertion and recovered peace.

One evening, after having parted with her mother, she was alarmed at over-hearing scarce audible exclamations of distress. Hastening to her mother's chamber, she perceived her fainting in Betty's arms. This sight banished every recollection of Neville, and she hastened to her assistance with all the alarm and solicitude of tender love. The
maid

maid perceiving her young lady's distraction, entreated her to be calm.

"My mistress," said she, "will soon recover; she has had these kind of fits almost every night for this last fortnight. Her only concern has been lest you should know it. Indeed I do not wonder at her fainting, for she generally spends the night in tears."

"Exemplary mother," said Maria to herself, "and is all this kind concern for a child, who, absorbed in her own unhappiness, has scarcely thought of her anxious sympathy?"

At this moment Mrs. Williams recovered, and perceiving Maria bending over her with looks of unutterable affection, she smiling pressed her hand, assured her that she was perfectly recovered, and wished her a good night.

Maria entreated that she might watch by her.

“ No,” said Mrs. Williams, “ I am so much better, that I have no other want than that of sleep; and the presence of any attendant always prevents my repose.”

Penetrated to the soul by these considerate marks of delicate tenderness, Maria withdrew, and resolved to render herself more worthy of the inestimable blessing of her mother’s love, by sacrificing that keen regret which might be compared to the unimportant rites of bigotted superstition which pretends to much merit, but in reality destitute of all, and only engrosses the time which is justly claimed by very important duties.

Determined to conquer a grief, which she never thought reprehensible, ’till she read its effects in her mother’s sufferings, she appeared at breakfast the next morning with a placid smile upon her countenance, instead of that melancholy composure which her features were wont to assume. Nor did she wait in silent dejection ’till her mother began
the

the languid conversation; she found, to her astonishment, that the powers of her mind were not, as she supposed, entirely annihilated. A heavy heart indeed somewhat impeded the lively flights of the imagination, but the stores of the memory were uninjured; and even benevolence proved that it only wanted the liberty of exertion to resume the enjoyments it so highly valued, and which would now acquire an additional zest from the experience of calamity. Mrs. Williams, with silent transport, beheld the happy change.

As soon as the tea table was removed, Maria proposed reading; and being permitted to determine the subject of their literary entertainment, she chose poetry. The natural warmth and romantic bias of her mind had ever rendered her highly susceptible of the enthusiasm of genius, and the flow of numbers; and the present state of her heart strengthened the native predilection. Amongst the miscellaneous pieces which she

read that morning, the following was her decided favourite.

ODE TO THE IMAGINATIONS.

1.

Ye pleasing phantoms, soothing forms,
 Who people fancy's sunny beam,
 When hope the buoyant bosom warms,
 And joy inspires the raptur'd dream ;
 Ye, who the fancied laurels wreath,
 Which animate the brave to dare ;
 Ye, who the soft enchantments breathe,
 Which spreads perfection round the fair ;
 Ye echos of the world's acclaim,
 Ye visionary shades of unsubstantial fame.

2.

Deluders of the mind ! I own
 Life owes to you its happiest hours ;
 High seated on your elfin throne,
 Ye rival nature's plastic powers ;
 For ye can o'er creation throw
 Charms which reality denies ;
 And boast, amid the polar snow,
 Arcadian groves, Hesperian skies ;
 Oh crown me with your thornless rose,
 Oh waft me to those isles, where joy's full current flows.

3. Benignant

3.

Benignant to a wretch distress'd,
For me your magic simples cull ;
And when remembrance stings this breast,
With opiate charms my feelings lull :
Bid these dim eyes no longer mourn,
The faithless friend, or lover lost ;
And to its hopeless, joyless urn
Confine affection's wailing ghost ;
Bid memory drop her useless hoard
Of vows that could not bind, of looks in vain ador'd.

4.

Oh from a heart too much deceiv'd,
Banish the hill, the lawn, the grove,
Where fond credulity believ'd,
Where falsehood wore the mask of love..
Ne'er let it paint the form divine,
Where every virtue seem'd to dwell ;
Or tell how from his lips benign
The hony'd accents graceful fell :
Oh let not his idea reign,
E'en if my vacant heart no other form retain.

5.

Come—bid the sense of honour rise ;
Let female pride and female shame
Disperse in air those guilty sighs,
That heave but at a traitor's name..

Who,

Who, all my confidence and truth
 With undeserved wrong repaid,
 Who for my unsuspecting youth
 The artful snare of ruin laid,
 Oh bid me a just vengeance take,
 Bid this heart cease to love, or in the struggle break !

CHAP. VII.

THE idea, said Mrs. Williams, of repairing to the imaginations for relief from distress, is pleasing and poetical; but like many of the soothing reflections which the muses afford, is proved fallacious by reason, and unavailing by experience. Fancy is an agreeable holiday companion, but if she visits us in a gloomy season, it is rather to torment

torment than to entertain us. She generally contrives to increase our regret, by aggravating the value of what we have lost, or by exalting our ideas of our own deserts, she renders us querelous repiners. Sometimes she ingeniously teazes us, by shewing us how much better we could have employed our mis-spent time, and builds such charming fairy castles out of past lapses and future possibilities, that we are almost hurried to distraction by the contrasted dreariness of our present situation. Turn over, my dear, a few leaves; I know a poem in the collection you have in your hand, which explains these delusions with great propriety, and directs the sufferer to the only real supports in the hour of calamity.

ODE ON THE CONSOLATIONS FOR AFFLICTION.

I.

When sorrow bars her murd'rous dart,
And nature's undefended heart

Receives the fatal blow ;

No more the syren pleasure charms,

With languid head and folded arms,

The penfive mourner stands to brood on cureless woe.

2. Fancy,

2.

Fancy, who oft in happier hours,
 From her clear mirror's magic powers
 Reflected pleasing forms ;
 Invited now to give relief,
 But multiplies the shapes of grief,
 Obscures the gathering night, and magnifies its storms.

3.

She darts into the fever'd brain
 Keen burning arrows of disdain,
 Sneers of illiberal mirth ;
 She fills with horrors not its own,
 Sad wants' reverberating groan,
 And deepens love's regret, by height'ning beauty's worth.

4.

Say, sons of sorrow ! have ye e'er,
 When summer breezes fan'd the air,
 A sportive insect seen ;
 Bask in the sun, or sip the dew,
 Or spread its wings of golden hue ;
 Yet soon the trifler flies, when winter's blast grows keen ?

5.

So with prosperity's warm gales
 The soft enchantress fancy fails,
 In elfin splendor fair ;
 Gay in her own arcadian reign,
 She builds a visionary fane,
 And bids deluded man adore the phantoms there.

6. More

6.

More certain aid, more lasting fires,
 Adversity's dim night requires,
 Its horrors to relieve ;
 When love laments its oaths forsworn,
 When friendship's rosy bands are torn,
 When meekness must accuse, and firm-ey'd patience grieve.

7.

Yet then, e'en then, despair shall fly,
 If conscience with approving eye,
 Views memory's guiltless scroll ;
 If summon'd to truth's awful bar,
 No proud revengeful passions jar,
 But only venial faults accuse the unpleaded soul.

8.

Though innocence unhappy fails
 To shield the breast, which wrong assails,
 Or generous feelings press ;
 Yet the kind guardian can bestow
 A firmness equal to the blow,
 And teach th' exalted mind to soar above distress.

9.

As Daphne's plant unchang'd can meet
 The winter frost, the summer heat,
 The light'nings blasting glare ;
 So innocence, a seraph mild,
 Though figur'd by an helpless child,
 Braves with its naked breast the arrows of despair.

10. Nor

10.

Nor shall the wretch, whose heart forlorn
 Feels aching guilt's corroding thorn,
 Each future hope forego ;
 Though memory shrinking and aghast,
 Turns from the record of the past,
 And owns that former guilt produc'd each present woe.

11.

Though all around th' horizon lours,
 Though summer friends no more with flowers
 Bedeck his falling shrine ;
 Though conscience, faint and listless long,
 Now rises like a giant strong,
 And thunders in his ear the threats of wrath divine.

12.

Still weeping by the sinner's side,
 Repentance stands his steps to guide,
 To mild religion's bower ;
 Mercy, inspirer of the strains
 Which echo through the ethereal plains,
 Gave to misjudging man that kind instructive power.

13.

She lulls regret, she humbles pride,
 She bids the doubts of fear subside,
 And passion cease to jar ;
 The fiends of desperation fly
 The clear effulgence of her eye,
 As night's dire shades avoid the radiant solar star.

When

When she had finished the poem, Maria confessed the justness of the reflections which it contained, and acknowledged that fancy was a very deceitful comforter.

“ I know,” said she, “ Rowe affirms that sloth and folly tremble at the impossibilities which they themselves create, and I find the observation just. In my trial, I indulged the idea, that my grief was insupportable, ’till I really made it so. I felt a pleasure in yielding to its impulse; and then fancied that a duty, which was only a blameable indulgence. Like Constance, whom Shakespeare so beautifully describes, I have given up to grief that space in my heart, which was formerly occupied by love. Last night, my dearest mother, roused my dormant reflection; the anxiety you have so deeply felt, and so kindly concealed, has struck me to the soul. The sorrow cannot be justifiable which afflicts you. My resolutions are too recent to allow me to boast of them; as one step however towards the recovery of my peace of mind, I will

will be always employed. At present I care too little about myself to be amused in decorating a person which I no longer regard; but if you will fetch the gown you bought for Nelly Waters, I think I shall have pleasure in making it. That good girl makes me ashamed; she is cheerful in real calamity, whilst I have lost nothing that deserved regard, and am possessed of a thousand blessings, of which she is destitute. Do not, my dear mother, draw an inference which I too sensibly feel."

Mrs. Williams wept with pleasure, but knowing that her daughter's mind was not sufficiently strong to bear a discussion which would renew the melancholy she wished to divert, she fetched the gown, and was extremely happy in seeing Maria interested in the business of contriving and adapting it to its intended wearer.

A few days convinced Mrs. Williams, that Maria, from a sense of duty and affection, would

would persevere in the resolution of endeavouring to regain her lost serenity. Though the high opinion she had ever entertained of her daughter's understanding and rectitude, prevented her from being much surpris'd at the agreeable prospect of returning cheerfulness, the young lady was all astonishment at the effect of her own efforts. The aspect of every surrounding object in a few days amazingly altered; and the beauties which she supposed were banished from Everdon with the faithless Baronet, agreeably excited her wonder, by gradually emerging from the sombre veil of melancholy. She had given up every joy as lost; but on a second view could not ascertain the absence of any, but those tumultuary pleasures approaching to pain, which Neville's presence excited: and as these were the source of all her former misery, she resolv'd to exclude love, from whence they originated, from her future life, and to dedicate her heart to the calm enjoyments of friendship, filial duty, and benevolence.

Her

Her admiration for her mother hourly increased; it rose to enthusiasm; nor could she forbear from often bursting into warm encomiums, which though uttered in the presence of Mrs. Williams, were too unpremeditated to look like flattery.

One day, after one of these spontaneous panegyrics, the good mother tenderly checked her child's partiality, by observing, that she owed to adversity the little merit which she possessed.

"And did you," said Maria, "derive additional virtue from what nearly deprived me of every quality deserving praise?"

"Some minds," answered Mrs. Williams, "require the awakening voice of affliction, to rouse their energy, whilst the generosity and moderation of others appear most conspicuous in prosperity. Mine is of the former cast, and with regret I own, that the allurements of prosperity led me into er-

rors, from which I was roused by what Gray finally calls, the stern rugged nurse of virtue."

"You have often," interrupted Maria, "promised me the history of your life."

"I have deferred a completion of that promise," answered Mrs. Williams, "from an unwillingness to depress your agreeable vivacity, but as it may now serve to recall your attention from your own sorrow, I will fulfil it."

She then began the narrative, which I shall present to my readers in the following chapters, not indeed exactly in Mrs. Williams's words, who often, through modesty; passed over her own merits, and in decent respect to the memory of the dead, extenuated the faults of one, who, whatever were his crimes, stood in a situation too sacred for severe censure.

CHAP.

C H A P. VIII.

“**Y**OU have heard me,” said Mrs. Williams to her daughter, “mention my father with affection and gratitude. He was a clergyman more eminent for his learning and piety, than for the value of his benefices. As I lost my mother at too early a period for me to retain the least recollection of her; my education was conducted entirely under the directions of my father; who either not knowing, or not valuing the characteristic accomplishments of our sex, neglected every graceful polish, and initiated me into the severer studies, commonly confined

finer to male pupils. He taught me the learned languages, and instead of permitting me to avail myself of the indulgencies commonly granted to our sex, he insisted that I should think justly, and reason correctly. My mind, under his tuition, acquired in strength, what it wanted in delicacy.

His life was a lesson of virtue, and his charity wore the amiable form of unbounded benevolence. The narrowness of his income indeed often restrained his liberal hand; but even to those objects thus apparently excluded, a number of little obliging offices, or at least the powerless wish, which as Johnson observes, is recorded in heaven, were extended. You are fond of poetry, Maria, perhaps you will not dislike to read a little manuscript I preserve with sacred veneration, which contains your grandfather's sentiments upon a virtue, of which he now, I trust, reaps the reward."

ODE TO CHARITY.

1.

Oh charity! thou radiant beam,
 Reflected from that light supreme,
 Creation's guardian eye;
 Best symbol of the Power who reigns
 In perfect bliss, yet gracious deigns
 To bend his pitying ear to sorrow's lowly cry.

2.

The heart in which thine ardour glows,
 No more is chill'd by selfish woes,
 Or feels unsocial joy;
 Directed by thy light divine,
 To griefs, which whilst they pain, refine,
 To griefs which quickly end in bliss without alloy.

3.

Such bliss the generous patron shares,
 When rising at an orphan's prayers
 He vindicates his right;
 Such bliss is o'er their bosom shed,
 Who cheer with hope the sordid bed,
 Where poverty and pain in deadly bonds unite.

4.

Nor only with the affluent train,
 Who open fortune's golden fane,
 Dost thou thy blessings share;

Alike

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Alike to all thy votaries kind,
Where'er exists the feeling mind,
Thou giv'st soft pity's sigh, and friendship's soothing care.

5.

If seated in life's humblest vale,
Whene'er they check the slanderer's tale,
They honour thy bequest ;
On them thy purest pleasures wait,
When victors of revenge and hate,
They vindicate or aid an enemy distressed.

6.

Thou dost a nobler system teach,
Than stoic virtues e'er could reach,
Or Pagan wisdom scan :
Diffusive, as the solar ray,
Which lightens all the ecliptic way,
Thy holy laws pervade, and fill the soul of man.

7.

Oh ! source of each connexion dear,
Of gratitude, of truth sincere,
Of candour, patience, peace ;
Oh ! worthy of the starry wreaths,
Which immortality bequeaths,
To crown thy hallow'd toils with joys that never cease.

. F 2

3. When

8.

When science dims her borrow'd fires,
When faith in certainty expires,
When prophecy shall fail;
Uninjur'd thou surviv'st alone,
Immortal as th' Eternal's throne,
While all the harps of heaven thy glorious triumphs hail.

When Maria had wept over this affecting memorial of departed goodness, Mrs. Williams proceeded.

“ We lived in a romantic part of Yorkshire, which seemed even by situation secluded from the rest of the world. My acquaintance were almost wholly confined to my own village, and the companionable part of my own sex in it was very limited. You must rank in that number my esteemed Mrs. Herbert, who, to rescue her parents from impending want, had given up a lover whom she justly valued, and united herself to a man destitute of every recommendation, but the possession of wealth. Her name was then Anderson; she is fifteen years older than myself;

myself; but the disparity of our ages made her entertain a kind of maternal affection for me; and it is entirely to her instruction that I owe every feminine attainment which I possessed in the early part of my days. Her life was rendered miserable by the brutality and ill conduct of her husband; and she has often said, that she was obliged to me for occupying many of her tedious hours.

“ Another of my companions was Miss Letitia Thornville, the daughter of the Lord of the Manor, who, educated in all the pride and ignorance of feudal greatness, supposed Amelia Davenport, the parson's girl, greatly honoured by the capricious marks of her uncertain favour: and so indeed, Maria, I then thought. All my little knowledge of dress and elegance, was derived from my visits at the Squire's mansion; and in spite of my Roman and Grecian literature, these were too dear to the folly and vanity of a girl, not to be purchased at the expence, of what I should now call, cringing severity. While

the fashions of London continued to be more interesting than the form of Helen's veil, or the colour of the mantle which Andromache gave to Ascanius; I continued to accept every invitation with which I was honoured, and concealed the indignities which I knew my father would resent. But though Miss Thornville was frequently so kind as to make me a cap, or assist me in the alteration of a gown, after she had previously mortified me to the degree of humility which she thought necessary: my heart never felt more than a distant respect for her, while it glowed with the tenderest love for my worthy Mrs. Anderson. Yet I was concerned when Miss Thornville married a gentleman of the name of Brereton, who resided in London; and being by far the finest person I ever saw, must, I concluded, make her transcendently happy.

“ My loss of a companion was soon followed by a real and deep affliction. My father, who had for many years suffered from the painful diseases incident to a sedentary life,

life, was attacked by a complication of disorders, which by their united efforts, threatened speedy destruction to a frame naturally vigorous, but debilitated by long and continued pain. The best medical assistance was procured. I need not mention my unwearyed attention; it was no more than duty, gratitude, and love required. I was fixed to his bedside, and have at least the consolation of reflecting, that though I could not prolong existence, I smoothed the bed of death. Thirty years, my dear child, with all the strange contrariety of events produced in that period, have been unable to eradicate my love for his virtues, or my regret at his loss.

“ He left me to all the miseries which an unprotected orphan, slenderly provided for, can feel. The sale of his library and effects discharged his debts, and I only inherited my mother’s portion of five hundred pounds for my future support. I at first sought an asylum with Mrs. Anderson. I could there

have enjoyed that tranquil serenity into which violent grief gradually softens, had I not been a daily witness to the unkind treatment of her husband, who seemed to value her patience and gentleness no farther, than as it allowed him the unrestrained exercise of brutal ferocity.

“ Compelled to quit my valued friend, or to behold her sorrows, aggravated by the cruel sarcasms with which unfeeling meanness loves to wound the virtues it cannot understand; yet ignorant where to hide my unfriended head, or by what means to make my little fortune adequate to my support, I was sinking under the load of perplexity, when Mr. and Mrs. Brereton came into the country on a visit to her father. I waited on her, and as she received me with great kindness, I ventured to make her the confidant of my distress. She seemed to pity me, and promised to consult her husband on some probable plan for my future life. I called the next morning again, to know the result of
this

this application. She then told me, with seeming satisfaction, that Mr. Brereton had entirely entered into her scheme, which was, that I should become an inmate in her family."

"We live," said she, "in style; you know I hate domestic management, and indeed our acquaintance is too numerous to allow me to dedicate my time to family duties. You shall undertake the direction of my household; I can rely upon your integrity, and shall be satisfied with your management. You shall be welcome to every accommodation which our house affords, and if your fortune proves inadequate to your personal expence, we will supply the deficiency. Besides" continued she, "Amelia, you are really handsome, and when we have removed your rural awkwardness, I do not think it at all improbable, but that you may make some fortunate conquest."

“Circumstanced as I was, Maria, I could not refuse this eligible offer. I knew Mrs. Brereton’s temper too well, to think that she would make a dependant perfectly comfortable; but I flattered myself that the advantages she offered, would counterbalance this inconvenience. I was then unexperienced, and like all young people, annexed to the scenes with which I was unacquainted, the idea of superior felicity.

“I arrived at a splendid house in town, and in the capacity of Mrs. Brereton’s humble friend, was introduced to the secondary pleasures of the great world.

“That situation which halts between the servant and the companion, is generally deemed miserable. Mine did not appear so at first. Mr. Brereton was uniformly civil, and his lady as little capricious as a superior benefactor, who is not possessed of a liberal mind, can be. He was so kind as to enquire about my fortune, and finding that my property

pertry lay in the funds, remonstrated so warmly on the folly of not endeavouring to increase it, by the large premiums which he could procure me, if I would place it out on interest, that he soon persuaded me (then little conversant in money matters) to sell out, and to confide in his hands my only refuge from absolute penury.

“ Soon after I had given this inconsiderate proof of confidence, I was alarmed by conclusive marks, that the income of the Breton’s was by no means equal to their expenditure. A difficulty of obtaining money for the round of daily expence, and repeated, though fruitless visits from importunate creditors, were too indisputable symptoms of falling fortunes, for me to turn my eyes any longer on the bright side of the portrait, or to consider Mrs. Brereton’s splendid equipage, expensive dress, or fashionable society. As I really had an affection for her, and tenderly regarded two lovely children, of whom, as their innocent prattle could not interest

their dissipated mother, I had principally the care; I felt more upon their account, than at the apprehension of my own destitute state. I reflected that I was able to procure my own subsistence, and endeavoured to reconcile my mind to a life of dependence."

CHAP. IX.

"I Was one morning sitting in the dressing-room with Mrs. Brereton, when her footman informed her that the gentleman, to whom his master had been so frequently denied, had called again, and seemed determined to wait in the front parlour for

for his return. My friend appeared violently alarmed."

"Upon my life," said she, "this is the young merchant, who won a few thousands of my husband about a month ago. He is so immensely rich, that it is quite shabby for him to expect payment. How provoking, that fortune will ever be bountiful to those who do not want her favours. I am told he wishes to be considered as a man of fashion; nothing would so soon ensure him that appellation, as a willingness to play high, and an easiness in exacting his debts. I wish I could talk to him myself, but I feel too much fluttered. You, Amelia, are a professed orator; go and exert your rhetorical powers—plead—say—any thing; I know Mr. Brereton means to pay him; only just now it is a little inconvenient."

"My concern for the poor lady could not prevent me from smiling at her desultory manner, and the whimsical idea that I could prevail

prevail upon an entire stranger to give up a claim to the amount of thousands, which though mentioned as a trifle by Mrs. Brereton, struck me as an immense sum. I reluctantly accepted the unpleasing commission, and upon entering the front parlour, for the first time beheld Mr. Williams.

“ He soon learned, from my appearance and manner, the nature of my situation in the family ; and as its morals were well known to be not remarkably strict, he, without answering my excuses in justification of Mr. Brereton, addressed me in that gay style of passionate adulation, which I knew was always significant of licentious designs. My heart sunk with grief and terror : I was indeed secure from any immediate danger, but I considered the present as only a prelude to many subsequent snares, to which my dependent state, and the personal advantages I then possessed, would inevitably expose me. I thought of my father ; of the honest indignation he would feel, if he knew the ungenerous

rous insult to which his poor and unprotected orphan was exposed. The resentment which should have warmed my breast, yielded to the liveliest transports of grief, and I burst into a violent flood of tears.

“ Your father was deeply affected. Indeed, Maria, he possessed a compassionate heart, and a generous disposition. He was an instance of the fatal effects which a sudden influx of wealth generally has on an uninformed mind, when joined to easiness of temper and flexibility of principle. Mr. Williams was the uncontrouled master of his fortune and his actions, even before the legal age. He was surrounded by those base flatterers, who make their court to young men, by exciting in their minds those criminal desires which they themselves feel, but want ability to indulge. Initiated by these miscreants into an early course of dissipation, he had long, ’ere I knew him, acquired habits which he afterwards wanted resolution to renounce.

“ Affected

“Affected by the concern I shewed, Mr. Williams entreated my pardon, assured me he mistook my character, and offered to purchase his reinstatement in my good opinion, by a renunciation of his demand upon my friend. I coolly answered, that the plaudit of his own heart for having done a generous action, was a more noble and more certain reward than the praise of any individual. I added, that after what had passed, his stay must be painful to us both. He made no answer, but bowed and withdrew.

“When I recounted to Mrs. Brereton what had passed, far from entering into my resentments, she congratulated me upon my good fortune.”

“You have made a conquest,” said she, “that promises to be advantageous to us both; I had foreseen that you would, for really you look divinely to-day. Manage it well, I dare say it will turn to your account.”

“Mrs.

“ Mrs. Brereton’s conjectures were in part right. After Mr. Williams had made several efforts to engage me in an illicit connexion, he thought proper to make honourable proposals. The only person to whom I could apply for directions how to act, was Mr. Brereton; and he found Mr. Williams’s friendship of too much consequence, to give any other advice than what would produce an immediate compliance.

“ I was married. If ever, Maria, you enter into that sacred engagement, may different sentiments attend you to the altar. I felt neither esteem nor love for the man whom I made the arbiter of my fate. His past behaviour to me had not produced the former; nor was there any thing in his manner so peculiarly adapted to my fancy, as to excite the latter. I yielded to the persuasions of those around me; partly intimidated by the terror of poverty, and partly induced by a girlish wish to enjoy the splendor and affluence, which, ever since my residence in town, I had heard

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heard held out as the desideratum of our sex.

“ Mr. Williams was anxious to justify his choice to the world, by giving every external advantage to my person and understanding. I yet think, with anxious regret, on the years which I passed in this giddy exaltation; when I was admired as a beauty, and applauded as a wit; when the splendor of my appearance excited envy, and censure, under the mask of friendship, pretended to guard me from indiscretions, while it only sought to publish my faults.

“ Numerous, I doubt not, were the opportunities I gave to exercise that unchristian temper. Rectitude of intention will not protect inexperience and credulity from many glaring errors. Fearful of losing my husband's affections, which I was conscious that I held but by the slight chain of novelty; I did not dare to tease him by applying to him for directions in any unpleasant predicament,
in

in which I beheld myself involved. He expected that I should ever meet him with smiles, and constantly appear ready to engage in those scenes of amusement, which he chose to substitute in the place of domestic bliss and wedded friendship. How poor, my girl, is that woman's boast, who is conscious that she rather gratifies the vanity, than charms the heart of her husband; yet this unavoidably was my lot.

“ My correspondence with Mrs. Anderson, which had declined after my departure from the country, was entirely broken off, owing to some insinuations of the Brereton's before my marriage; but our esteem for each other continued inviolate.

“ I had been a wife about a year, when one morning I called at our bankers, to change a draft which Mr. Williams had given me, and was struck at perceiving in one of the clerks, the lover of Mrs. Anderson, whom, as I before told you, she renounced,

to

to rescue her parents from poverty, by a mercenary marriage. He knew me, and warmly congratulated me upon my advantageous connexion."

"But," added he, smiling, "if madam you will excuse the freedom of the intimation, there is a person not far from this house, who will be yet more interested in your good fortune."

"My inquiries led to a discovery, that he was now the husband of Mrs. Anderson, who resided in lodgings in the same street.

"I flew to my excellent friend, who held in her arms the son with whom you are acquainted, then but a few weeks old. I will not expatiate upon our mutual pleasure and surprise.

"She informed me that Mr. Anderson, on his death, left her in possession of all his fortune, upon condition that she never chang-
ed

ed her state of widowhood. If she married, she was to forfeit all, but a narrow stipend. I had lost my parents," said she, "nor had I a connexion with any one, whose welfare was dependent upon my conduct. I felt a proud unwillingness to be obliged by the fortune of one, whose memory I did not esteem. The man, who in early youth had gained at once my admiration and my love, generously excused a breach of promise enforced by filial duty, and tenderly importuned me to partake of the humble competence he could offer, which mutual affection would, he observed, magnify to redundant wealth. Was there, my dear Amelia, any reason why, after sacrificing my youth to duty, that I should not now assume the liberty I enjoyed, of following the impulse of an inclination, which a variety of trials had exalted into rational esteem? I knew of none.

After having given to Mr. Anderson's memory the time which custom and decency required, I cheerfully resigned his fortune to

his relations, and became my worthy Herbert's wife. You too, my dearest girl, are married. Pardon me, I must still call you by those endearing appellatives—equal happiness is, I trust, your portion."

"I could not give a direct answer to this affectionate appeal. My heart abhorred the language of insincerity, and prudence forbade the disclosure of matrimonial infelicity, even to the faithful bosom of confiding friendship. I gave only a general reply, and expatiated on the pleasure which I should feel in her society, and the advantages which I should derive from her instruction."

"You forget," said she, "that you are no longer Amelia Davenport. A husband claims a kind of proscriptive authority over the friendships of our sex. You cannot doubt my desire to be with you, but I will not indulge the pleasing hope, 'till I am assured that Mr. Williams does not consider inferiority

inferiority of fortune as an objection in the choice of his wife's associates."

"On my return home, I was anxious to urge a request, which I considered as too reasonable to be denied; but your father's countenance soon convinced me, that my expectations were fallacious."

"The world," said he, "is not ignorant of your situation at Mrs. Brereton's; I have endeavoured to palliate that and your want of fortune, by urging the goodness of your extraction, and the gentility of your connections. You know this, and yet inconsistently wish to form a strict intimacy with the wife of a banker's clerk. Surely you do not care how much you degrade me."

"I endeavoured to plead gratitude for early obligations."

"If," continued Mr. Williams, "you feel yourself indebted to these people, discharge

charge it to the utmost ; you may command what sum you please. I do not wish you to remain burdened by pecuniary obligations."

" I attempted to urge her uncommon merit, and observed, that no gratuity was capable of repaying innumerable acts of uniform kindness ; but your father's temper was not proof to my repeated applications, which appeared in the least to militate against his pleasure."

" I do not doubt," said he sarcastically, " the superlative excellence of those whom you honour with your affection. It is my interest, however, to forbid your having any intercourse with beings so superior to myself, lest it should lead to dangerous comparisons. I should have thought that your sense, I might have said your gratitude, would have complimented me with a cheerful acquiescence." In speaking these words, he angrily left the room.

" I remained

" I remained silent a few moments, pensively contrasting the elegant apartment in which I sat, with the humble dwelling in which my happy, though despised friend enjoyed every pleasure which virtue, prudence, and mutual affection could supply. I envied an union in which correspondent fortune had left no opportunity for the reproaches of a haughty benefactor, and instead of reconciling my mind to my duty, I indulged every suggestion which could aggravate my distress.

" Too proud to adopt a clandestine intercourse, and fearful that my mind would be unequal to a parting interview, I had recourse to my pen, and copiously informed Mrs. Herbert of what had passed, and of my own painful sensations. I inclosed a bill for one hundred pounds, and begged that she would allow me to be sponsor to her son, and to accept that as a christening present. I will read you her answer, which I carefully preserved."

“ Before I reply to your affectionate letter, permit me to return your liberal present. Should death, or any unforeseen misfortune, prevent us from making a provision for your godson, I shall commend him to your care. Be his foster-mother; I shall with implicit confidence commit my orphan to your protection and benevolence.

“ As my fears predicted the refusal which you have met with, I am glad that I did not indulge the hopes which your presence inspired. Mr. Williams has acted as became a man tenaciously careful of his wife's character; and I trust that your prudence will not permit him to complain that disappointment clouds that countenance which his disinterested attachment may expect should always wear the smiles of gratitude. Recollect, my dear Amelia, I will not wound your feeling heart by a more distant address, that we give up nothing but a pleasurable indulgence—our esteem must continue the same; and if the circumstances which at present

separate us, should ever cease to operate, we may again enjoy a satisfaction which can only be gratifying when it is unblameable. 'Till then I shall remember you in my affectionate wishes and prayers; yours, I know will be offered with equal warmth for

MARY HERBERT."

" This worthy woman soon after accompanied her husband to Jamaica. He went in quality of agent to a gentleman, who had large possessions in that island. Fortune met them there with favouring smiles. Honest diligence and patient industry, in a few years procured them the blessing of competent independence."

C H A P. X.

I Felt my separation from Mrs. Herbert too deeply, to be able entirely to conform to the sage advice which she gave me. I did not indeed complain; but frequently after spending the evening in frivolous uninteresting society, or on receiving some fresh proof that Mr. Williams's love had dégénéré into indifference, if not disgust, a tear would steal in silence down my cheek.

“ I dressed, visited, formed parties, and entered into the amusements of the gay world, with a hope of finding them interesting; but

but the peculiar texture of my mind was sensible of a void, which only some tender sentiment could fill. Every effort which I made to enjoy the pleasures of conjugal friendship, was ineffectual; and I could not discover in the crowd by which I was surrounded, any with whom I wished to form an intimate connexion. They seemed the flattering followers of fortune, or those common characters whom we never can elevate above the rank of acquaintance. Thus I spent my time in a manner unsatisfactory to myself; without deriving from my mode of life, either improvement or content.

“ Ever since our marriage, we had kept up an intimacy with the Breretons. Mr. Brereton having entirely spent his fortune, was dependent on the gaming table, for the means of preserving an appearance. His first efforts with Mr. Williams in that science were, as I have already observed, unsuccessful; but fortune made him ample amends. I soon found that my husband's account of the

events of the evening was but a recapitulation of losses. Alarmed at the fatal effects of this propensity, I endeavoured to detach him from this ruinous folly, by every means I could devise. My endeavours were unsuccessful; a gloomy fullness took place of that airy cheerfulness, which was formerly his chief characteristic; and a fretful impatience, when not immediately stimulated by the prospect of amusement, plainly shewed that he and reflection were enemies.

“ As Mr. Williams was less solicitous to have me move in the vortex of fashion, I grew domesticated, and spent my time in reading and pensive meditation. Every circumstance plainly convinced me, that poverty was coming upon us with hasty strides. But she no longer assumed that terrific aspect, with which seven years before she hurried me into a marriage, which I did not cordially approve. I had experienced every pleasure dissipation could bestow, and conscious of their vanity, was eager to resign them.

them. I longed to fly from observation and parade, to some peaceful obscurity, like that in which I spent my earliest years. Those personal attractions too, which had alarmed me with the apprehension of danger, seemed no longer to suggest any occasion of fear. I cannot say that time had paled the roses on my cheeks; but they had faded before their no less certain destroyers, late hours and constant festivity.

“ I seemed possessed of that equanimity which cheerfully waits the contrarieties of fortune, when I perceived myself in a situation which predicted, that I should quickly assume the maternal character. A discovery, which would at my first marriage have given me infinite pleasure, seemed now only a source of more poignant affliction: and the sufferings of the innocent victim I was about to produce to misery and want, overcame all my philosophy, and sunk me into the deepest dejection; whilst the gloom which had be-

fore enveloped my husband's mind, gave way to the wild starts of phrenzy.

“ You was born, my love, under the most melancholy auspices. An execution took possession of our house, and compelled me to remove, as soon as I possibly could, to lodgings far more humble than those of Mrs. Herbert's, from which I had been interdicted. To increase the agony I felt, Mr. Williams had absconded, and I was ignorant of the place of his retreat. I had every dreadful consequence to fear from his remorse and despair, and no consoling hope to sweeten my cup of sorrow.

“ Mr. Brereton, who foresaw, I might say, accelerated, our fall, wisely avoided the troublesome applications of a decayed friend, by forging a quarrel with us, a little previous to the discovery of our insolvency. The cruel sarcasms which his lady bestowed on our distress, could only be equalled by the
mean

mean submissions with which he had flattered my prosperity.

“ Our other friends, I mean acquaintances, acted as the followers of wealth commonly act, they pitied our affliction, but referred to each other the general task of relieving it.

“ You wonder, Maria, how I supported these accumulated miseries. Be not surprised at my affection for you, for it is to you that I am indebted for life. I dreaded your birth as the superlative aggravation of my distress; but when I held you in my arms, I found you a blessing more invaluable than the wealth of the Indies. Your innocent looks softened the throbs of despair; they bade me exert every dormant faculty, and by connecting your existence with mine, rendered it valuable. I had now a motive for exertion, and I found myself equal to all my trials.

“ At last a wild incoherent letter from your father, convinced me of his safety, but disclosed a dreadful tale. He had been betrayed by the man in whom he had confided, was seized by a merciless creditor, and lodged in prison. The horrors of his mind at his new habitation, were described in all the nervous eloquence of high wrought grief.

“ I took you in my arms, and flew to the dreary mansion. I was not without hope, that your father who had never seen you, might derive the same consolation from gazing on you which I had done; but conscious of his want of parental duty, it drove him to madness. He vowed that he could not support the sight of what he had so cruelly wronged, and threatened immediately to terminate his loathed existence. I will not distress you by dwelling on these horrors. My tears, my prayers, and my expostulations, at length roused him from his insensibility. Our child, said I, is at least so happy as not
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to know the fortune from which she has fallen. We will educate her conformable to her station, and the labour of our hands shall contribute to her support. Oh! do not aggravate our misery! we are already destitute! do not expose us to feel the widow's and the orphan's wrongs!

"Your father clasped you in his arms, and mingled tears with his caresses."

"Will you never, Amelia," said he, "teach this child to curse my infernal folly; never tell her that it was her father who reduced her to infamy and beggary?"

"I must first," said I, "learn to reproach you myself. You shall never hear from me the language of complaint. I will forget the wealth which you intitled me to possess, and remember only the humble state from which you raised me." He seemed softened at these words, and sighing, wished that he could reward my goodness.

“ Delighted at hearing these expressions, I endeavoured to console him with the thought, that his aunt, Mrs. Arbuthnot, was rich, childless, and possessed of ample power to relieve his wants.”

“ Do not name her,” answered he, “ you know we have disagreed, and she is obstinate and implacable in her resentment.”

“ I told him I thought highly of her benevolence, and obtained his reluctant permission to apply to her for relief.

“ I found Mrs. Arbuthnot’s disposition too much resembled the idea which my husband had formed; no arguments could reconcile her to her nephew, but she affected to pity my distress, and appeared deeply interested in your preservation. She offered us an asylum in her house, and promised to provide for our future support; but as I found the condition annexed, was, that I should be separated from your father, I declined the intended favour.

favour. I had shared his prosperity, and my soul revolted from the idea of forsaking him in his distress. She at last promised to use her endeavours to free him from confinement, and to use her influence in gaining him some permanent support.

The former was speedily affected. A conscientious surrender of all his effects, procured an honourable discharge; and as it now became the fashion to pity us, every one of our acquaintance crowded round us with offers of immediate aid, and projects for our future subsistence. I am loath to think that a knowledge of Mr. Williams's disposition accelerated these offers; yet when it was found that he retained, even in want, the pride of independence, it seemed as if every rejected friend deputed others to share the praise of cheap generosity. Bred in affluence and ease, you will not wonder that he reluctantly hesitated, and nicely pondered every plan that was proposed, by which he might obtain a future subsistence. At last was discovered

covered what the confusion in which his affairs were involved, prevented him from at first daring to hope; that after defraying every debt, there would be a small surplus of his property left, and as a testimony of their approbation of his conduct, his creditors permitted him to reserve his estate in the West-Indies, which now appeared to us an inexhaustible mine, though formerly, from its insignificance, it was over looked in the redundancy of our possessions.

“Your father enjoyed this intelligence with a transport that cannot be described. He was now under obligations to no one, and he determined to leave England, where every object reminded him of his former opulence, and dedicate his future life to the improvement of his property. I begged to accompany him, but from motives of tenderness, he refused my request.

“You was,” he said, “just arrived at the most dangerous period of infancy; and he,

he feared, lest your life might be sacrificed to the inconveniencies of a long voyage. He observed too, that after the excruciating distress which I had undergone, I needed repose, and he wished me to accept Mrs. Arbuthnot's offer, and continue with her until he had prepared a comfortable house for my reception, and 'till my girl's strength seemed more adequate to the undertaking."

"We were separated. Need I, Maria, describe to you the life I led with Mrs. Arbuthnot? you recollect that she was in the highest degree capricious and whimsical; it was utterly impossible to avoid displeasing her; but she was at heart very much my friend, and her resentments were not lasting. In one thing only was she uniform, her dislike to Mr. Williams; to whose indiscretions, magnified by ill will, I was daily compelled to lend a painful hearing.

"In every letter which I sent to Jamaica, I entreated the welcome summons. I pleaded
ed

ed your strength of constitution, and my own impatience, to exchange a life of idle dependence for the active duties in which I wished to engage. I broke open Mr. Williams's answers with eagerness, but still met a confirmed negative. At one time he was tired of the country, and determined to return; then he represented that one fortunate year would give him the competence which he desired. There was always some vague excuse, and some distant scheme held forth to amuse my anxious wishes."

CHAP. XI.

"NEARLY seven years thus past, each opening with hope, and closing with disappointment, when I received a letter from Mrs. Herbert, that determined me to adopt a plan, on which I had often meditated. She began in the tenderest style of renewed friendship, and informed me that they had been for some years acquainted with Mr. Williams, whom they had just discovered to be my husband. She advised me, if no very urgent ties detained me in England, immediately to set out for the western world. She hinted, that the solemn bond of marriage
was

was only dissoluble by death; and that a husband's domestic affairs were seldom conducted with such propriety, as when under the direction of a wife. To these prudent reasons she added her own anxiety to see me; she entreated that I would, upon my landing, immediately send for her, and she rejoiced in the idea, that she could now evince the regard she had ever felt for me, by correspondent actions.

“ Conscious that there was some concealed motive which stimulated Mrs. Herbert to give this advice, I lost no time in preparing for my departure. Your aunt reprobated the scheme, as dictated by the wildest enthusiasm, and reproached the folly and ingratitude that madly surrendered a faithful friend and zealous protector, for a husband who had avowedly deserted me, and proved unmindful of every sacred duty. Her arguments could not dissuade me; I knew that love would urge an affectionate wife to the step which I resolved to take, and I should have

have felt ashamed to have perceived that principle was a less powerful stimulation.

“ When she found me determined, she pleaded for your stay; and the arguments she used, awakened every painful conflict which maternal tenderness and divided duty could feel. Uncertain as to my own reception, I was unwilling to expose you to the cold attention, or yet more painful neglect, which would probably be my portion.

“ From a hint in Mrs. Herbert's letter, I expected to find Mr. Williams's affairs in extreme disorder. Mrs. Arbuthnot promised to leave you amply provided for at her demise; and as I thought that I was not warranted to sacrifice your future welfare to my own fond wishes, I at length consented to a separation, the most agonizing that I ever experienced.

“ Can you, Maria, remember our parting? you certainly must. You was torn
from

from my arms. I screamed, and entreated for another look ; it seemed the last I should ever take. During my melancholy voyage, my whole employment was to gaze upon your picture, or to commend my deserted child to that Providence, which seems peculiarly attentive to the sorrows of orphans.

“ My kind friend hastened to me as soon as she was informed of my arrival. Worn by distress and fatigue, her consolations were remarkably soothing. I begged her to be explicit, and assured her that I expected fatal news respecting my husband.”

“ His faults,” said she, “ are no more than the common vices of the island. The planters, generally speaking, countenance each other in irregularities, at which an English libertine would blush. The redundant fertility of these tropical climes, and the bad habits which slavery introduces, are not favourable to the cause of virtue. The lord of the soil, accustomed to the mean subservience of those

those around him, who think themselves honoured by being made the instruments of his crimes, soon overcomes every restraint of conscience, and pleads example to conceal, if not to extenuate his fault. Mr. Williams is less culpable than many others. But surely, Amelia, you have been blameably wedded to ease and indulgence in renouncing the matrimonial tie, rather than the enjoyments which your own country afforded."

"So ungenerous and fallacious an accusation, the source of which it was too easy to trace, increased my agony to a degree, almost beyond endurance. Mrs. Herbert endeavoured to mitigate the sorrows that overwhelmed my breaking heart. She readily admitted my exculpations, and strove to persuade me that patience and prudence might yet recall my alienated husband."

"He speaks of you," said she, "in a manner which convinces me that your character enforces his involuntary esteem. He endeavours

endeavours to reconcile himself to his own conduct, by censuring the goodness which he cannot but admire. Conceal my intimations, and allow him to attribute your arrival to tenderness and regard. Soften the severity of your virtue; affect not to see, what, if known, is beyond your power to remedy. There is a blindness, equally favourable to charity and to peace. Vice, while it fears discovery, cannot be avowedly profligate; and virtue, while she preserves the candour, retains the dignity of her character."

"Such were the invaluable instructions of my friend, to which I strove to conform. Our first interview was at her house. It was agreed, in order that I might judge of her sentiments, that he should not be previously informed of my arrival. How did I dread this excruciating meeting? with transport, far beyond what the fondest lover could conceive, I saw my husband's looks equally express surprise and pleasure; and I heard him
inquire

inquire after his little girl, in the interesting voice of paternal tenderness. Agreeably to Mrs. Herbert's advice, I mentioned nothing of the past; my thoughts were all turned to my future prospects.

"The necessity of my presence was but too evident. I bore my separation from you with greater ease, as I felt myself daily discharging my maternal duty, even at the distance of several thousand miles. As I was convinced that I must reside in the island, I frequently resolved to send for you; particularly after Mrs. Arbuthnot, by dying intestate, had left you deprived of a present protector, as well as a future provision. But I was deterred by my fears; I felt alike unwilling to expose your constitution to the baleful influences of the climate, or your tender mind to be vitiated by the no less pernicious examples of pride, cruelty, and luxury, which is unhappily prevalent in a spot, where there is too great distinction in the human species.

"I super-

“ I superintended the concerns of my family, and by introducing a degree of order and oeconomy, I rescued from profusion that competence, which is now adequate to our support. My presence restrained open profligacy, and enforced at least the appearance of decorum. I have yet a sublimer gratification. During the long illness which preceded your poor father's death, I had the inestimable opportunity of awakening reflection, of combating despair, of inspiring religious hope, and of elevating devotion.

“ During this painful interval, in which I saw nature struggling with agony, anxious, yet unable to dissolve the conflict, Mrs. Herbert was my sole consolation. Did I say my sole consolation? as if those could be destitute of comfort, who, though their fondest hopes are blasted, can still listen to the cheerful voice of approving conscience. He at length expired; and had I acted a part different from what I did, it would have been difficult

difficult in my situation to have avoided the censures of the world. They would have stiled grief, affectation; and composure, insensibility. I did not ask the opinion of others. My grief was as sincere, as were my endeavours to conceal it. For human frailties, which are more the effect of situation, than intentional depravity, shall I defame the ashes of the dead? His death-bed scene, when he bid me supply the duty in which he had failed, yet more endears to me his precious orphan; and I often think that his spirit, now free from the taint of error, has stood near me, and smiled with pleasure, whilst I performed his last bequest.

“ I have brought my narrative to a conclusion. It exhibits no uncommon portrait of the vicissitudes of human life. It teaches the importance of forming our early connexions with propriety, and shews the insufficiency of human foresight. The marriage that I thought would preserve me from poverty, was the means of plunging me into

the evil which I feared; and it is to the friend, whose society was once interdicted as a degradation, that I owe the peace and independence which I now enjoy."

C H A P. XII.

I Will now leave Mrs. Williams, proceeding not unsuccessfully in her plans of amusement and consolation, and return to Mr. Herbert, who, as my readers may remember, set off in the second chapter of this my second volume, to discover the cause of the dispute between Neville and Seymour.

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Some days were unavoidably spent in inquiring for the Captain's lodgings ; and when he had found them, he was informed that the young officer was gone into the country to attend his sister, whose disorder was increased to a degree highly alarming.

His curiosity, I could call it by a more laudable name, was however gratified as to the ground of the inveterate quarrel which Sir Henry had mentioned. The generous heart of Herbert glowed with indignation at hearing the dishonourable tale. To conceal it from Maria, would, he thought, be to participate in Neville's guilt. Her pure and refined soul must shrink with abhorrence from a man, who had degraded himself by such systematic guilt ; and her gentle sympathetic temper would warmly interest her in a lady's wrongs. He was going to write to her, but recollecting their last conversation with more of grief than resentment, he considered that this intelligence would only be referred to the mean arts of a calumniator.

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He was prevented from concerting measures with Mrs. Williams by a doubt, which only a delicate sense of honour could suggest. Conscious of the power of beauty, and sensible that his interest in Maria's happiness rose to a degree of which he had thought friendship scarcely capable; he feared to ask his heart if he should have been as anxious to protect the sweet villager, if she had been less amiable and attractive. But though he could not exactly determine the state of his mind, that uncertainty prescribed certain rules of conduct, and made him determine rather to rouse Sir Henry to a sense of his crimes, than by an invidious recital of them, to prejudice Mrs. Williams yet more in his disfavour.

He took therefore the only step which appeared consistent with probity and candour. Being well acquainted with the Baronet's secret haunts, he soon discovered his retreat. I shall not describe the reciprocal transport which the friends shewed at this unexpected interview. Their feelings were mutually too
warm

warm to be long restrained within the bounds of civility. Roused by some pointed sarcasms against impertinence and officious curiosity, Herbert threatened to acquaint Maria with every particular relative to Miss Seymour; and their dispute had arisen to a very considerable degree of acrimony, when Mrs. Williams's messenger arrived; and the letter which he brought, threw Neville into such a state of agonizing frenzy, that Herbert's bosom felt too much pity to add to his affliction, by reproaches.

Sir Henry knew too well the rigid honour of the Oxonian, to suspect that he had artfully affected a discovery, at which he appeared no less surprised than himself.

Mrs. Williams's servant being interrogated, and having described the person of the officer who called at his mistress's, the morning preceding his departure, explained the means by which the unwished intelligence had been communicated.

For some weeks Neville varied alternately to the contrarieties of rage and stupor. He was tormented by perceiving how dearly he prized the blessing which he had lost; and he was driven to desperation at discovering the oblique path which had diverted him from happiness as well as virtue. Maria, roused by a sense of honour, duty, and principle, to bid him an eternal adieu, was infinitely dearer than the same Maria, when yielding without suspicion to the insinuations of deceptious love.

The concern which Mr. Herbert felt for this unhappy man, was far more poignant than what his libertine friends could entertain. His exalted notions made him keenly sensible of the misery of those who dare to deviate from the injunctions of duty. He considered him as sinking under the double load of disappointment and remorse; and from a hope that compassion for his less guilty partner in criminal indulgence, might have some share in awakening his present distress, he
mentioned

mentioned Miss Seymour's declining health, and urged the necessity of endeavouring to procure her pardon.

Sir Henry's mind, though reduced by despair to that abject and dependant state, that as Shakespeare observes, the smallest twine might lead him, yet retained sufficient vigour to protest against a matrimonial connexion with any one but Maria. To extenuate any apparent injustice to the other lady, he urged the vehement resentment which her family entertained; a resentment which he could almost affirm, that no concessions on his part would mollify. He protested that he had for some time abandoned every scheme repugnant to Maria's honour; and conscious that he could not remain in England, his plan was to have married her, and then to have retired with his charming bride to some part of Switzerland, there to dedicate his days to the admiration of her virtues, and the improvement of his own.

He conjured Herbert by their former friendship, and what he knew would have greater weight, by his concern for his immortal interest, to assist him in rendering this plan practicable. He would immediately execute his part of it; nay, he would even submit all his future conduct to the nice and discriminating eye of the stoical mother. There was nothing which he would not do; nothing which he would not promise, to obtain the idol of his heart.

Prevented from making these proposals in person, on account of Mrs. Williams's interdiction, whose power he thought it dangerous to provoke; and terrified also by the intimation of Seymour's lying in ambush, (for he did not credit the story of his visit to his sister; and 'till he had totally lost all hope of gaining Maria, he thought his life worth preserving) he conjured Herbert to be his emissary. The commission was unpleasing, but it was urged with so much earnestness, that Edmund reluctantly undertook it. But
left

lest he should execute any rash plans in his absence, he informed him that his assistance was only conditional, and depended upon his abjuring all sinister designs.

Before he arrived at Everdon, Maria had recovered in a great degree, her serenity of mind. Her subdued distress had indeed given an air of langour to her appearance, and a pensive cast to her manner; but it was so restrained by prudence, and animated by fortitude, that she certainly never appeared so irresistibly charming.

Conscious of former impropriety, she discovered, upon Mr. Herbert's approach, a degree of confusion, which that gentleman, by whom no turn of her countenance was unperceived, construed into remaining resentment. In consequence of this he felt all that embarrassment which is natural, when our efforts are unsuccessful in gaining the favour of those whom we esteem. Recollecting at length, that it was not his own

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cause

cause which he came to plead, he endeavoured to silence regret, and mentioned with compassionate tenderness the dreadful state of Sir Henry's mind, and his impatient anxiety to procure her pardon.

"You may," said Maria, frankly, "assure him that I entirely forgive his designs against my peace. I hope he has not forgotten to supplicate the forgiveness of that unhappy young lady, whose severer wrongs require not only ample acknowledgement, but reparation."

"You mean Miss Seymour," answered Edmund; "but Neville's thoughts are entirely fixed on you. It is your reconciliation which he implores; your kind commiseration which he solicits. There is nothing which he will not do to obtain you; his offers are unequivocal and honourable. I once thought him incapable of a sincere attachment; I now confess I have wronged him, and am convinced, that if you should
favour

favour him with your hand, that you would bestow it upon a person deeply sensible of your excellence."

Maria threw her eyes upon the ground, and paused for a few moments; she did not debate upon the nature of her reply, but in what manner to express it.

"As I cannot but recollect my former folly," said she with a dignified air, "I do not wonder that Sir Henry supposes I will accept his offer; and the weakness with which I once strove to vindicate him from your just reprehensions, must be too well remembered, to permit you entirely to believe that I am not still the victim of fond credulity. I must, sir, wait 'till my future conduct restores me to your good opinion; but in the interim, I will request you to inform your employer, that I am determined in my rejection."

Charmed at the firmness of her look, voice, and above all, her wish to regain his esteem, Mr. Herbert was going to protest his warm admiration of her person and virtues; but scorning to betray his trust, he again resumed the character of a pleader.

“ I would not for the world, Miss Williams, attempt to deceive you. I must allow Sir Henry’s past conduct has rendered him totally undeserving of your regard, and the greatness of your mind cannot, I know, be allured by any adventitious persuasions, drawn from fortune or rank. The only argument on which I build my hopes of success, is, that he sincerely loves, and will deserve you.”

“ I dare not,” replied Maria, with energy, “ trust to contingent virtues; nor can I plunge my soul in perjury, by swearing to love and honour a man, whose conduct I not only disapprove, but abhor. The tenderness which I once felt for him, confirms my determi-

determination ; my heart is so ready to adopt the manners of those whom it approves, that it would be presumptuous in me to risk, not only my peace, but my principles, by such an incongruous union. These motives are irrefragable, even if I can forget what is due to Miss Seymour ; and that Sir Henry, by marrying me, instead of expiating his former faults, would involve himself in the aggravated crime of deliberate perjury."

" He is secured from such a charge," answered Herbert, " by the inexorable resentment of the lady's family ; who, after the public disclosure of her frailty, would not consider marriage as any reparation."

" And does she join in this opinion ?" interrogated Maria.

Herbert confessed that the Baronet had not tried her sentiments, and he believed never would.

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“ At least,” said Maria, “ I will not be the impediment. By all the wronged friendship which you fir once offered me ; by all the tender esteem subsisting between our mothers ; I conjure you to convince Sir Henry, that my mind is unalterably fixed. Tell him that he has my pardon, my pity, and my prayers ; you may add, if you do not think the expression too strong, my tears ; but my love is alienated for ever.”

“ Blessings innumerable are the portion of him, on whom you bestow it,” exclaimed Mr. Herbert with a warmth which he could no longer conceal. “ But dear and amiable creature ! consider that this answer plunges an unhappy being into desperation, whom your society and example might elevate to virtue.”

“ I must recur to my former argument,” resumed Miss Williams, trembling, “ and secure my own. Let me entreat you to urge me no more. Your pleas do but distress
me ;

me; they cannot extort my consent. I admire the warmth of your friendship, and I am an entire convert to your sincerity and honour. Do not, sir, abuse the power which you have over me; a power still stronger, from the recollection of my past suspicions." As soon as she had spoken these words, she rushed out of the room.

Mrs. Williams, who had been an attentive auditor to the latter part of the foregoing conversation, observed, with no little degree of pleasure, that Mr. Herbert's inclinations had severely combated his words during the debate. When Maria left the room, he continued in a fixed posture, struggling with an emotion, which he vainly endeavoured to suppress. At length turning to Mrs. Williams, whom he but then recollected was present, he exclaimed, "Your daughter, madam, is an angel."

"She is affectionate, conscientious, and sincere," replied the delighted mother.

"Her

“ Her disposition, though gentle and plausible, possesses a stability and energy beyond her years. Sir Henry would, I am convinced, reap nothing from further solicitations, but repeated refusals.”

“ How unfortunate,” said Herbert, “ that a mind so formed for confidence and love, should have its susceptibility betrayed by a villain’s duplicity. She must surely forswear a passion, which has proved so baleful to her peace, and entirely renounce the sex which Neville’s conduct has disgraced.”

“ Time,” said Mrs. Williams, “ must determine this. At present I have not the smallest grounds, whereon to form my opinion.” Mr. Herbert fetched a deep sigh, and respectfully took leave.

C H A P. XIII.

MR. Herbert was not tardy in fulfilling the promise which he had given Sir Henry Neville, of informing him of the result of his application to Maria; but that wretched, disappointed, and unworthy man's impatience to know her determination, was so great, that he would have thought an envoy slow, that had been horsed upon the flightless coursers of the air. He was no longer the man of ease and address, the ornament of society, and the delight of all who knew him: nor was he, to descend to
his

his private character, the artful libertine, exulting in his triumph over unguarded beauty. He was a miserable being, disgusted at the folly of vice, because it was unsuccessful; infatuated by the charms of that virtue, which he could not ruin; and caught in the net which he had spread for the destruction of others.

Though his fears had anticipated the refusal which Herbert announced, they had not prepared his mind to meet it with equanimity. He imprecated her pride, with those curses which were due to his own duplicity; and when the first storm of frenzy had subsided, he enquired if the mother had been the orator on this occasion.

"So far from that," returned Edmund, "she did not even enter the room, 'till her daughter had given a decided negative; and had you witnessed the firm tone, in which she expressed her determination, you would have

have been convinced by her composure, that you have nothing to hope."

"Will you persuade me," exclaimed Neville, "that she has renounced her former character? her temper was once placable and compliant; whence is this newly acquired and stoical firmness? I will see her myself; I will trust my cause to no other orator."

Mr. Herbert endeavoured to persuade him to abandon the useless pursuit. He urged Seymour's threatened intervention, and recapitulated every argument that could convince him of Maria's unalterable resolution. At length Neville appeared to acquiesce, and affected resignation; he even resolved to go to London, declaring that he no longer wished to avoid his threatening opponent, as life, without Maria, was not worth a care.

The same morning on which Sir Henry declared that he would return to London,
Herbert

Herbert ostensibly fixed for a journey to Oxford. To confess the truth, neither of the gentlemen were sincere in their intentions. The Baronet wished to get rid of a companion, whom he considered as a restraining spy; and Herbert could not depend on the calmness which so rapidly followed the most extreme marks of rage. Everdon was indeed the spot, to which they both meant to direct their peregrinations.

As they did not exactly take the same route, Herbert arrived first at an inn, which lay upon the great road from the north to London, and was about fifteen miles distant from Everdon. As he stopped there in the evening for some refreshment, a hearse, followed by two mourning coaches, drove into the yard. A young gentleman, clad in deep mourning, alighted, and with difficulty assisted an elderly lady, attired in similar robes of woe, in stepping from the carriage. As they passed his window to go into the house,

Herbert

Herbert perceived them to be Captain Seymour and his mother.

A presentiment of the melancholy reason of their appearance, filled the breast of Edmund with manly sorrow. He wished that it were possible for him, without intruding upon the retired sanctity of grief, to inform the mourners how truly he sympathized in their wrongs. He wished to give them the consolation, which he imagined a knowledge of the generous conduct of Maria, must impart. He regretted that he was too slightly acquainted with the unhappy family, to put in practice these instigations of philanthropy. Whilst he was thus musing, a chaise stopped to change horses; and though the gentleman who was in it, sat very back, as if to escape observation, he plainly recognized Sir Henry Neville.

He flew to the gate, trembling with rage, but a person yet more vindictive than himself,

self, had already outstripped him; I mean Captain Seymour.

Neville perceiving himself discovered, alighted, and called for an apartment, to which he was immediately followed by the other two gentlemen.

Breathless with resentment, they stood for some moments gazing on Sir Henry, who in vain endeavoured to conquer guilt and shame, and to preserve a composed and intrepid countenance. He made repeated efforts to speak, but his faltering voice, not less faithless than his palid cheek, betrayed the emotion and terror of his soul. Whenever his eye glanced on Captain Seymour's habit, his bosom heaved with deep-drawn sighs, that seemed to issue from an over-laboured heart. At length he faintly articulated, "I know your business with me, name the time and place, and I will meet you."

"Meet

"Meet thee, villain," exclaimed the indignant officer, "and dost thou think by an honourable death, to expiate thy repeated crimes? thy cowardice, thy perfidy, thy meanness, thy diabolical—but I want terms to express what thou art—a despicable wretch, unworthy of my sword. Monster, give me back my sister. Off," said he to Herbert, who caught hold of his arm; "if you knew my wrongs, you would not restrain me."

"Let him come on," said Neville, I cannot fear a madman."

"Thou liest, villain," returned Seymour, "a straw would appal thee. Dost thou not fear? follow me—I will shew thee what must strike even thy callous heart. Canst thou, darrest thou see my Eliza's breathless corpse, and my distracted mother? tell me, thou murderer of innocence, darrest thou look upon thy victim?"

"He

“ He shall accompany you,” said Herbert, seizing Neville’s arm; “ Yes, he shall see the destruction and misery which he has caused.”

Sir Henry’s resistance to his powerful assailants, was ineffectual; they forced him to the funeral apartment.

It was lighted in that solemn manner, which served to make the awful object it contained, obscurely visible. The coffin was placed at the upper end, and some female attendants, in deep mourning, sat at a distance, recollected and silent.

It seemed as if Captain Seymour’s rage was meliorated into grief, on entering the room. He ordered the coffin lid to be removed; then after covering his face with his handkerchief, for a few moments he gazed upon the corpse.

“ My

“My poor Eliza—my dear lost sister—deeply sensible, when too late, of an error which only death could expiate;” exclaimed he, in incoherent accents; “yet thou art now at rest, whilst I—gracious God! Yonder stands her seducer. Villain, confess that this awful visage was once expressive of beauty and innocence!”

Herbert’s heart throbbing with indignation and pity, seemed as if it would burst from his bosom. To describe the sensations of Neville, is impossible. He leaned silent upon the coffin; his eyes were fixed, and his cheek bloodless.

“Thou mean deceiver; thou base betrayer,” continued the vindictive brother; “does this sight wring thy soul? to aggravate thy agony, know that she forgave thee—her dying breath conjured me to spare thy life. Thy punishment then shall be to live; to live in infamy, execrated by all who deserve esteem, even shunned by the loose as-

fociates of thy less atrocious crimes. Thou shalt bear a hell in thy own bosom here, and despair shall plunge thee into endless misery hereafter."

Saying these words, he rushed out of the room to attend his mother, who having been accidentally informed that Sir Henry was in the same inn, had been seized with violent hysterics.

Neville, after rolling his wild eyes around the apartment, and alternately darting them on the once lovely victim of his treachery, now senseless and inanimate, hurried down stairs. Mr. Herbert followed him.

"Just heaven," thought he, "if I, who am guiltless of this ruin, feel so deeply, what pangs must rend Neville's heart?"

The dreadful shrieks of the unhappy Mrs. Seymour, and the hurry of the attendants running to her assistance, disturbed the stillness

ness of the night. Sir Henry sat in a gloomy stupor; his head resting upon his hands. Herbert, with mingled resentment and compassion, gazed in silence upon him. At length, looking round with a petrific glare, the former discovered Edmund, down whose wan cheeks tears streamed in a copious torrent.

Neville started. "Go," said he, "inquire after Mrs. Seymour—tell her I am distressed at her sufferings—I wish to know how she does—don't delay—go, prithee go—and bring her son back with you."

Mr. Herbert asked "what he could propose from another interview."

Sir Henry replied, "that he had something important to communicate, and urged him to be speedy in his return."

On his entering the suite of rooms occupied by the Seymour's, he found the lady

much recovered. She was supported by her son. Her fears for his safety had greatly aggravated the painful feelings which naturally rose in her mind, on knowing that the seducer of her lifeless daughter was their inmate.

Seymour readily accepted Mr. Herbert's apologies for his intrusion. "The sensibility," said he, "which you express for our misery, evinces a benevolent and worthy heart. I feel anxious to justify my conduct to you. The pride of injured honour, joined to my love for my lost sister, raised me, on Neville's unexpected appearance, to a frenzy of rage. My mother and myself were accompanying the dear reliques, to deposit them in our family vault, when the wretch, whom I cannot name without indignation, broke in upon our designs. Did he come to insult our sorrow? you, sir, seem to be his friend, can you tell what brought him here?"

"A villianous

"A villainous design, I fear," answered Herbert, "but no ways relative to your family. He wishes now to see you. Let me entreat you, Captain Seymour, to be calm; he has something important to communicate; he seems deeply affected."

Mrs. Seymour threw her arms around her son. "My only child," said she, "do not instantly break this agonized heart."

Mr. Herbert assured the terrified parent, "that he would prevent any rash consequences."

"I need no sureties, madam," exclaimed the young officer; "an unexpected interview left me no time for recollection; but I now remember the arguments which first gave a check to my sanguinary designs, and I think of my solemn promises to you, and above all, Eliza's dying adjuration still resounds in my ears."

Here a violent scream, which evidently proceeded from Neville's apartment, terminated the debate.

"He is dead, poor wicked creature," resounded from all parts of the house.

Herbert flew like lightning to the room, where he had just left the miserable man; his fears had anticipated the horrid catastrophe. Sir Henry lay almost lifeless upon the ground, weltering in his blood; a pistol, the fatal instrument of destruction, was still grasped in his hand.

A surgeon was immediately summoned, and his wound, upon examination, was pronounced mortal. During the few hours he continued to exist, his terrified attendants shuddered at his agonies. One moment he called on them to remove Miss Seymour's corpse; and another to bring Maria Williams; then screaming out in torments yet
more

more excruciating, he called for some friendly hand to give him instant death.

A few minutes of comparative ease and recollection, preceded his departure. Herbert, who never stirred from him, conjured him to employ that interval, in testifying his penitence, and desire of reconciliation with the Seymour's. It was not judged prudent that the mother should personally express her pardon, lest the effort should renew her suffering; but the Captain, who felt even his resentful heart soften into commiseration, communicated it with his own.

Sir Henry, then turning to Herbert, confessed that his intended visit to Everdon, was designed to terminate in the possession of Maria. If persuasion failed, force was to have been employed. "Implore," said he, "for me, that angel's pity and forgiveness; tell her, that even in these dreadful moments, her image is the only solace of my soul."

“Oppressed by infamy, and galled by remorse, was it possible,” continued he, “that I could bear to live. You called me coward, Seymour; I feared to meet you, because I had injured you; but you see I dare to die.” Then pausing a few moments, “Say again,” exclaimed he, “did Eliza forgive me?” Seymour bending over him, confirmed the assurance, that long ere she breathed her last, every resentful thought was entirely subdued.

“Great God!” said Neville, gasping for breath, “whither am I going, Herbert?—I have been rash—desperate—is there any hope—any mercy, ah!—what no mercy for me—Speak,” continued he, convulsively, wringing the hand of his pitying friend; violent faintings succeeded, and he expired in inexpressible horrors.

A dreadful proof that neither external advantages, nor even the possession of agreeable or brilliant intellectual qualities, can secure happiness,

happiness, if virtue and integrity are not resident in the mind. Guilt, even when triumphant, can never know repose; but when to the worm in its own breast, disappointments and misfortunes are added, it will generally fly for relief to that despair, which seals its condemnation.

C H A P. XIV.

FROM scenes so full of terror, I will with pleasure conduct my readers back to Everdon, to shew the effect of compassionate sorrow upon the mind of innocence.

Mr. Herbert was busily occupied in performing the last duties to Sir Henry's remains, and in yielding every assistance in his power to his surviving relations, who were overwhelmed with consternation at his dreadful catastrophe. He however found leisure to send to Mrs. Williams a faithful narrative

of the event. Tenderly anxious to preserve Maria's peace, he entreated that the shocking particulars might, if possible, be concealed, lest the tidings should severely pain her susceptible heart.

Mrs. Williams thought differently; she considered fortitude as absolutely necessary in the catalogue of female virtues. Abhorring duplicity, and unwilling to subject her own veracity to the dread or inconvenience of future discovery; after having prepared her daughter's mind, by a few pious reflections, she delivered to her the letter.

On perusing the shocking narrative, commiseration and horror were blended in her face; but gratitude was the first sentiment that her lips expressed. She looked up with humble resignation to heaven, and blessed the over-ruling Providence, that had, by this dreadful expedient, rescued her from destruction. Her tears then flowed for the unhappy man, whom shame and despair had

violently driven from a life, which the smiles of youth and fortune might have endeared: Yet even the first expressions of her grief, seemed more to resemble the benign philanthropy of pitying charity, than the stormy anguish of regretting love.

Sorrow, thus decently circumstanced, and guided by such proper restraints, becomes indeed commendable. It exalts, instead of weakening the faculties of the soul. No peevish complaint; no querulous enquiry presumed to arraign the merciful, yet severe dispensation. She did not even permit her fancy to paint the happiness which she might have known, if Sir Henry's agreeable qualities had been equalled by the goodness of his heart. But thankful that a timely discovery had rescued her from his artifice and her own credulity, she determined, that if at any future period, a murmuring thought should dare to invade her breast, to recollect this singular preservation, and to arm her

soul

soul with resignation and gratitude against contingent evils.

Mrs. Williams contemplated her daughter's conduct with admiration. Acquainted with every sentiment in Maria's mind, she saw no danger to apprehend from the composed and gentle melancholy, which perhaps a susceptible heart, could not in her situation avoid. She trusted that time would restore the lovely and enchanting cheerfulness of youth, and felt satisfied that the tempest which threatened to wreck her peace, had subsided.

Maria spent much of her time in her bower, which covered with early woodbines, reminded her of the return of spring; and its agreeable concomitant, the return of Mrs. Pierpoint. She was impatient to listen to the delightful recital of the felicity which she had enjoyed; nor was she without hope, that the pitying tear of friendship would flow over

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the melancholy narrative, that told the ruin of her dearest hopes.

Charlotte, since her assumption of the matronly character, had been a very remiss correspondent; and the few letters which she had written, could only be styled short and affectionate. The free vivacity which was formerly the chief characteristic of her epistolary manner, had entirely disappeared. But Maria, who now thought that the plaintive song of the nightingale was preferable to the lively carrol of the lark, was not displeased at the alteration; which, as she could not doubt her friend's happiness, she ascribed to Mrs. Pierpoint's sympathetic participation in her misfortunes.

After various delays, the new married pair arrived at Mr. Raby's, whose impatience to behold his daughter, was only equalled by that of her lovely friend. But from fatigue, or some unaccountable cause, the countenance of the fair bride did not exhibit a striking
 portrait

portrait of connubial felicity. This was the more astonishing to Maria, as the Major's high spirits plainly proved that he was perfectly well and happy. Mr. Raby, much affected by his daughter's dejection, repeatedly called upon her to be merry, and in order to enliven her, concealed his own feelings under the appearance of redundant mirth. Every jest was however unsuccessful, and seemed only to spread a deeper gloom over her mournful face.

As it was impossible to obtain a private conversation that evening, Maria was forced to suspend her friendly anxiety 'till her next morning's call. She was going to open the dressing-room door, with all the ease of intimacy, when the noise of an altercation, too loud to be amicable, made her consider whether company would be agreeable. Whilst she was debating how to act, she heard the words, folly, ignorance, city breeding, and the jest of every body, uttered by the husband; while Charlotte's tongue, equally voluble,

voluble, and in rather a higher key, banded back pride, poverty, and ingratitude. Before Maria could determine what to do, something was said relative to complaining to Mr. Raby: to this the Major replied, "With all my heart, and be sure do not forget to mention, amongst my other faults, that I married you out of pity to your tender sensibility."

As he approached the door, in uttering these words, Maria found that retreat would be impossible. In passing her, he assumed his usual air of gaiety.

"Your poor friend, Miss Williams," said he, "is a little indisposed this morning; you have been so long acquainted, that you must know the disorders to which she is most subject, and can probably administer relief."

Charlotte met Maria with the bitterest lamentations against the cruel inhumanity of her husband's conduct. Her charge consisted

sisted of three points ; that he neglected, contradicted, and laughed at her. The first might be endured, particularly in London, where she was surrounded by pretty fellows ; but the two last must, by a woman of spirit, be deemed intolerable. She knew that her desires were not unreasonable, for her father had always indulged them ; and it pierced her very soul, to think that the man, whom she had voluntarily selected to receive every obligation which she could bestow, who was bound by nature to take care of her, had infinitely less tenderness for her than her father. If, indeed, the Major's opposition appeared to be dictated either by reason or affection, she might possibly be conquered by argument, or won by gentleness ; but, "Madam you shall," or "Madam you shall not," was language which she never would submit to. Yet the most aggravating circumstance of all was, that when he had urged her temper, (for she hated disguise) to that degree that she was ready to say, and to do a thousand ridiculous things, he would assume

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an easy air, wonder what disturbed her, and generally stept out to invire company to dinner, by which means he compelled her, at least, to conceal her resentment, and perhaps, by the time of their friend's departure, his agreeable deportment during their stay, had entirely disarmed her anger, 'till he again roused it by some fresh provocations.

"Could you believe," continued she, "that though he was so entertaining yesterday evening, he had quarrelled with me all the way from London, only because I said my next new chariot should be exactly like Lady Jane's. And this morning, when I was almost determined to forget his ill usage, and be good humoured, he told me that my appearance was ridiculed at the birth-day. What a malicious and false intimation; he knows that I was complimented as one of the best dressed figures in the room."

"But as these differences are not relative to essentials, why, my dear," said Maria, "will you dispute about them?"

"You

"You are a novice," answered Mrs. Pierpoint, "it is impossible not to support our own opinion, when we know that it is right, and that our husbands only oppose us on purpose to vex us. Besides, were I wrong, he ought to yield the point; let him remember the fortune which I brought, and the disinterested preference I shewed to him. I surely might expect all tenderness, and indulgence; but I am resolved that my father shall know all."

"Can you, my dear," exclaimed Maria, "resolve upon so rash a step? would you murder his peace, by confessing your unhappiness in a connexion, from which death alone can free you. I would not pain you for the world; but you must remember that Major Pierpoint was not his choice."

"I cannot forget my own partiality," returned the young wife, "as my worthy husband every day has the gratitude to tell me that I must forgive him a little indifference, because

because I did not leave him an opportunity of learning to make love. But I have yet sufficient spirit to retort, scorn; I feel ashamed of tenderness or complaint, and from this moment he shall know that I can hate, despise, and torment as well as he himself."

Maria was dreadfully affected at these expressions. To be in a continual state of warfare; to be bound to "live with a person whom she hated and despised; what affliction, what misery could equal so deplorable a situation? on her return home, she told her mother all, and after execrating the Major's ungenerous conduct, dropped a pitying tear over her unhappy friend.

"True, my dear," said Mrs. Williams, "a susceptible mind, that placed its felicity in domestic harmony, must feel exquisite anguish on discovering its partner's unworthiness; but there are hearts of a different texture, and minds that pursue other objects.

Notwith-

Notwithstanding Mrs. Pierpoint's passionate complaint, I will venture to affirm, that she will never fall a victim to conjugal sorrow.

"You know I love to give you my undisguised sentiments. I do not think the characters of either Mr. Pierpoint or his lady are likely to be improved by a commerce with the world. They are both airy in their manners, and uncertain in their tempers. You know I always thought the ruling passion in your friend's mind, was vanity, and to this I ascribed what she called love. It now, I perceive, takes a different turn, and she wishes to be thought a woman of the world. Disposed to imitation, she will naturally adopt all the habits which promise to facilitate her assumption of that appellation. Indifference and caprice are amongst the prominent characteristics of this inconstant age; and she decides too hastily, and reflects too little, to perceive that these are dangerous errors. It is not six months since her imprudent and romantic attachment urged her

her to marriage; yet she already consoles herself for the negligence of this adored man, with knowing that she attracts the attention of a fluttering tribe of insignificant beaux. Her reason for hating, despising, and tormenting her husband, is, because he said that she was ill dressed. I think the Major's behaviour to her is very unjustifiable; for to make his wife an object of ridicule, is a meanness to which a man of sense and honour would scorn to stoop. But he must possess uncommon merit, who can preserve affection and gratitude for a person, who so plainly discovers the inconsistency and perversity of her own disposition.

"I have ever considered your Charlotte to be the woman from whom Pope drew his general idea of our sex, and thought that in order to sketch her mental portrait, we should

- "Dip in the rainbow, trick her off in air;
- "Chuse a firm cloud before it fall, and in it
- "Catch, 'ere she change, the Cynthia of the minute."

Parental

“ Parental indulgence greatly added to this incertitude. It is possible that a very judicious husband might, if he had fixed on a retired life, have given stability to her conduct; but with Pierpoint it is impossible. I fear she will learn nothing of the world, but its vices, which she will engraft upon her own follies.”

Maria, at her next visit to the Manor, found her friend in a very different humour. She was surrounded by a circle of country ladies, to whom she was dictating fashionable dresses, and retailing fashionable scandal. With all the non-chalance of conscious superiority, she expatiated on the elegant amusements of the metropolis; pitied poor lady Twaddle, against whom the Earl, her husband, has just commenced a crim. con. process; and spoke of Lady Jane Bellmour's having an execution in her house, as a circumstance which gave an eclat to her character. Mrs. Pierpoint thought herself extremely happy in this grand display; but her audi-

tors had prejudices of their own, and felt unwilling to pay any great deference to one whom they used to consider as their inferior. 'Tis true that they borrowed her patterns; but in return affected to be scandalized at the familiarity with which she talked of her conversations and male visitors.

Mr. Raby, though he liked his daughter's wit, was offended at her ridiculing his house and furniture; but above all, at her declaring that the country had nearly killed her with ennui, which was a disorder he had never heard of.

Her husband, who was ready to faint with confusion, at hearing her discuss polite topics in inelegant language, had no other consolation than a half confidence in the ignorance of the company.

The astonished Maria took leave with the rest, and after relating to her mother the fashionable conversation she had just heard,

expressed her satisfaction, that her situation secluded her from a world, which strongly excited her contempt and abhorrence.

“Content,” answered Mrs. Williams, “is so amiable a virtue, that we are pardonable, if we suffer an attachment to our own station, to lead us to a degree of prejudiced partiality. Yet we should be careful of involving any condition of life in indiscriminate and general censure. Nor are you an adequate judge of the manners of the great, because you have seen a specimen of their vices in Sir Henry Neville, and their follies to day exemplified in Mrs. Pierpoint. The behaviour of the former was truly agreeable, but unfortunately the graces were engrafted upon a bad heart; and the latter is but an awkward copy of a character, which is unpleasant in the original. She imitates its shades, but has not the art of preserving its excellencies.

“Folly and vice, my child, are the growth of every age, country, and station. They preserve their nature, but vary their appearance according to the soil in which they vegetate. What in the clown seems gross and brutal, wears in the gentleman a more refined exterior; and the consummate art of the courtier, is only cunning in the rustic. When I say that mediocrity of fortune is most favourable to virtue, I only give it the praise which must naturally result from its being less exposed to temptation. Honesty, fidelity, and gratitude, often exist in the meanest cottage; and honour, generosity, and elevation of sentiment, as frequently mark the man of exalted rank. The Supreme Being, who discriminates our merit according to our positive, not our negative qualities, will honour those with the most transcendent rewards, who have withstood the severest trials.”

C H A P. XV.

EVERDON grew every day more horrid in the eyes of Mrs. Pierpoint; and as this was the only subject upon which she and her gay spouse intirely agreed, her determination to quit it may be adduced as an agreeable proof of connubial complacency. But unhappily a quality called taste, might safely contest, nay, justly claim, the wreath which duty presumed to arrogate.

This, in the lady's mind, was a new faculty, or at least, a very highly improved one. A very short period had elapsed, since

with exuberant spirits she partook of all the enjoyments, which a walk in the meadow, a moon light ramble in the wood, a dance upon the lawn, or a gallop after the fox hounds, afforded. And could she have dared to be ingenious, they would still have given her the highest pleasure; but as she fancied that they were ungenteel; and as she knew it was fashionable to find fault with every thing, she employed her wit to ridicule what her caprice compelled her to relinquish.

A real connoisseur may be forgiven, if he sometimes appears fastidious; but to pretend to discover defects, without having a soul to relish beauties, is one of the most despicable pretences of affectation.

The poor father strove to please, and as every thing appeared to him much the same as it used to be, he wondered why his dear Charlotte should so constantly disapprove. Tired at finding all his efforts to give pleasure prove unsuccessful, he no longer opposed

sed their departure ; and Mr. Pierpoint and his lady set out on a tour to the lakes : for though Charlotte professed to despise rural scenery and rural pleasures, she had no objection to an excursion which had in view a fashionable object.

Maria's regret at her departure was by no means so poignant as on their first separation. She too plainly saw the alteration in her manners and sentiments, to hope to preserve an intimacy. She gave a sigh indeed over the dear companion she had lost, but felt consoled for her double disappointment in love and friendship, by recollecting the uncommon blessing which she enjoyed in her mother.

I have left Mr. Herbert for some time, and am desirous to introduce him again to my reader's notice.

After performing every duty which the Neville family required, inclination would

have hastened his steps to Everdon, but he felt it impossible to appear before Maria in any other character than that of a lover. He wished not to wound her delicacy by a premature address; and he recollected that her mother had mentioned time as the restorative of cheerfulness, and the moderator of distress. Determined to try its lethean qualities, he returned to Oxford. During his absence, he kept up a punctual correspondence with Mrs. Williams; and when a rheumatic attack deprived that lady for a short time of the power of writing, Maria, at her request, assumed the pen.

I never suspected that my heroine possessed very extraordinary epistolary powers; on the contrary, I should have supposed that ease, delicacy, and simplicity, were all the advantages which her letters could boast. But Mr. Herbert, who really was a sensible and well informed man, discovered in them all the wit of a Sevigne, and all the learning of a Dacier.

Filial

Filial piety shortened the period of his voluntary banishment, and drew him from his academic bower. His mother's weak and decaying state, called for his presence, and he flew with grateful affection to

“ ——— Rock the cradle of reposing age,

“ With lenient art extend a mother's breath,

“ Make langour smile, and smooth the bed of death :

“ Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,

“ And keep a while one parent from the clay.”

They who can peruse these fine expressions of domestic tenderness harmonized by the sweet numbers of “the Swan of Thames,” without feeling in their bosoms the throb of approbation, will consider Mr. Herbert's application of them to his own conduct, as the result of either folly or hypocrisy ; particularly when it is known that he laboured to reillumine a lamp that had burnt near seventy years ; and was now the only bar to his unrestrained possession of a handsome fortune. Some of my fair young readers too, who are already enamoured with the windmills of

modern Quixotism, will blame me for exhibiting the portrait of my hero, engaged in the common duties of domestic life. They will tell me, that a fairer field for reputation lies before me, that I should have given him the gloss of chivalrous honour, or the sacred flame of liberty; either of which would have added elevation and enthusiasm to his virtue, and rendered him much more the object of general admiration, than his administering to the wants, excusing the weaknesses, and mourning over the infirmities of age.

In my reply to these fair critics, I shall inform them that I am a member of a little book society, and constantly peruse every new publication, from whence I acquire my knowledge, not only of the politics, but the morals of the world. By these I discover, that one general spirit of philanthropy, honour, liberality and freedom, is gone abroad; and I congratulate my own good fortune in living at a time, when all public virtues seem so well understood and practised. I even
fancy

fancy myself an inhabitant of old Rome, and doubt not, that if the modesty of our eminent men would permit their actions to be published, we should have examples of disinterested patriotism, which would throw the Horatii, Decii, Fabricii, and Cincinatii of former times, quite into the shade.

But after indulging these glowing raptures, whilst I drink my tea, I take up a less classical production called a news paper. I there read, to my no small astonishment, of Right Honourables being seized at gaming houses, in company with notorious sharpers; of assertors of the rights of men evading the rights of creditors; of patriots who gain immortal honour by combating oppression, yet unluckily are absolute bathaws, wherever their influence can extend. These discoveries somewhat check my national exultation, and notwithstanding I do not pique myself upon singularity, yet I cannot help thinking, that in proportion as public virtue, or at least

what passes current for it, flourishes, private goodness declines.

Those actions that pass before the world's eye, are equivocal: they may proceed from the sublimest motives, or they may be the offspring of vanity. We all act and speak well, when in the presence of those, whose esteem we are anxious to acquire. Nothing is easier, than by a flowery harangue on a popular subject, to influence the passions, and extort the applause of a prejudiced audience. But I would follow the man who thus speaks and acts, to his family. I would see him, when, free from the restraint of observation, his character assumes its natural aspect. Is he still the kind benevolent philanthropist? are there no latent marks of pride, tyranny, and cruelty? is he yet conscious that he is surrounded by fellow creatures, capable of feeling ill usage, and detecting folly? Should an affirmative be the welcome reply, I will thenceforth give him my hearty plaudit, and cheerfully

cheerfully subscribe to the sincerity, as well as to the superiority of his character.

I know there are a sufficient number of originals possessed of this comprehensive merit, to justify my ascribing it to Mr. Herbert. But as it seems chiefly necessary for a rank in life, above that in which I have placed him, as the principles of government are well understood, and the cause of liberty and philanthropy need no additional defenders; I thought that in this speculative and declamatory age, a practical, instead of a theoretical reformer, would be a novel, and not unpleasant character.

So much for my female politicians and philosophers. To such of my readers who have escaped this fashionable infection, I would recommend a cautious doubt of that merit, which appears to obtrude and force itself upon their regard. There are now neither dragons, enchanters, nor giants, for these zealous night-errants to combat. The evils

most dangerous to the damsels of the present age, lurk in the bosoms of their pretended champions; and the drawcanfir who sallies forth to attack the vices and follies of the world, should at least be careful that he does not make war against his own household.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

THOSE readers who have passed over the sage and laborious reflections with which I concluded my last chapter, will be happy at seeing me in this, resume the narrative.

Mrs. Herbert's recovery, left her son's mind at leisure to indulge that tender passion, which when fixed on a worthy object, and unembarrassed by vexatious circumstances, forms the most agreeable reveries which the imagination is capable of enjoying.

Every

Every successive interview with Maria, confirmed his high idea of her excellence, and increased the ardency of his wishes, to gain a heart which he judged invaluable. The plainness of his disposition rendered him averse to constraint and disguise, and urged him with blunt simplicity, to avow a passion which was at once his pleasure and his pride. But though he read in Mrs. Williams's eyes, an entire approbation of his pretensions, Maria's reserved and cautious pensiveness, seemed to indicate a confirmed resolution of repressing every hope that had more than friendship for its object. He trembled to offend her by an open avowal, and yet feared to be punished by a deprivation of that esteem, with which he was now favoured. The thousand respectful attentions which his heart hourly dictated, did but recall to Maria's mind the assiduities of a man, who once appeared like Herbert, clad in the robe of honour. She could not think that a person, who knew her former folly, could have any other design than to reconcile her
to

to herself. She praised, with a sigh, the generosity of such an intention, and with regret reflected, that she was unworthy the affections of a judicious and considerate man. Such, on a nearer appearance, the Oxonian appeared. Whatever, on a cursory view, seemed odd or ungraceful, on a more intimate acquaintance, lost its singularity.

She found that he possessed great good sense, and much literary improvement; this, enlivened by a characteristic view of humour, rendered him an agreeable and instructive companion. His attentions to his mother placed him in a still more elevated point of view; and his behaviour to his domestics, corresponded with this amiable conduct, and seemed equally expressive of benevolence and urbanity.

On his first arrival at Everdon, he was so affected at the story of Nelly Waters, that he procured her lover's discharge, and by settling a small annual pension on the old woman, rendered

rendered the young couple's future prospects comfortable.

Mr. Raby, since his daughter's visit, had fallen into a melancholy and dejected state of mind. Herbert frequently devoted a few hours to the entertainment or consolation of the forsaken old man, and won, from his gratitude, the sincere confession, that he found from a stranger the attention and comfort, his only darling indulged child neglected to give him.

Nor were these the only instances of his philanthropy. Every one who knew him, could tell of some little service which his good nature had agreeably rendered them; and Maria never heard his name mentioned in company, without somebody apostrophizing, "Ah! that is a friendly honest fellow."

She wondered at first how he came to escape the detraction which usually follows
- merit,

merit, and could give no better reason for his popularity, than that though very vivacious in his conversation, he was a professed enemy to slander and personal ridicule, and to that wit which is founded on sarcasm. Every one knew that their character was safe in his hands; his own conscience never led him to suspect the worst of others, and when candour refused the vail which charity required, his indignation was rather pointed at the vice, than the vicious person. To this was added, an unassuming propriety of behaviour. He never appeared to arrogate more virtue, or more wisdom than his associates. In fact, he was rather in the habit of doing good things, than saying fine ones.

Esteem in Maria's mind soon rose to admiration. Void of any other design than that of securing his friendship, and unconscious of her own power, she felt an awkwardness in his company, which originated from conscious diffidence. She never so highly valued the literary instructions which she

she had received from her mother, as now. Yet Mr. Herbert's superior knowledge, made her think her own indigested and superficial. She wished to penetrate into the depths of those sciences, over which she had before thrown a cursory eye. She at last resolved to request Mr. Herbert would undertake the task of her instructor. This he accepted with a transport, which cannot be described. The new character made their interviews still more frequent, and Mrs. Williams, who had long been fully acquainted with Mr. Herbert's sentiments, perceived with pleasure that her master's merit was a very agreeable and frequent subject of the fair pupil's conversation.

That gentleman, soon after his mother's recovery, had discovered to Mrs. Williams his admiration of her child. But when she expressed her satisfaction in the warm terms of transported pleasure, the mind of Herbert, which was by no means deficient in delicacy and susceptibility, foresaw a danger to the
dear

dear girl's peace, from a proposal so strongly seconded. Like generous Osmyn, he knew that marriage would make him wretched, if it made not his Zara happy; and he entreated, nay, extorted a promise from the good mother, that she would not only keep his secret in her own bosom, but that she would avoid saying any thing in his commendation, or even dropping the most distant hint, that she should feel satisfied at their being united. "You, madam," said he, "will excuse me, when I own that I have a whimsical jealousy of your influence over Maria's mind. I know filial duty would induce her ready compliance with any proposal that has your sanction: but though all my hopes of happiness are centered in obtaining her, I should be wretched, even in her society, if I imagined a latent reluctance rendered her less happy in the union than myself. I must be certified that I owe her hand to herself alone, and as you are the only rival I dread, you must suspend your influence."

Mrs.

Mrs. Williams, smiling, promised neutrality. "But perhaps," said she, "you will not be displeased if I occasionally give you a little information of the progress you make in my daughter's esteem."

This offer was gladly accepted, and at various times fulfilled. A lover who had less diffidence, would have felt exceedingly elated with the intelligence which he frequently received; but he saw through different optics to those generally used by modern Corydons. They magnified the lady's merits, and diminished his own.

While Maria and her adorer remained thus circumstanced, the world, which has long been possessed of predictive powers, not only discovered their latent affection, but even sealed their marriage contract, and fixed their future plan of life. Her young acquaintance frequently charged her with her supposed attachment, and urged her, by an absolute avowal, to confirm the opinion which they were

were determined to entertain. She answered these attacks with that firm positive denial, which she thought most adapted to impress on them an idea of her resolution to spend the remainder of her life in a state of blessed singleness; but whether, through the incredulity of her auditors, or through somewhat suspicious in her own manner, Maria's endeavours to convince them of her indifference to Mr. Herbert, were remarkably unsuccessful.

I am so zealous an advocate for the honour of my own sex, that nothing but my regard to truth, could extort from me a confession, that amongst our few foibles, curiosity may, perhaps, be reckoned. The young girls, resolved to gratify this propensity at all events, planned a scheme to surprise her into a confession. They determined to tell her that they were now assured of her veracity, which Mr. Herbert's late behaviour to Miss Mandeville, rendered incontestible; and if she betrayed any concern at hearing a report of

of

of his being particular in his attentions to that lady, they would immediately enjoy the laugh of triumph, which so fair an occasion offered.

Maria fell into the snare, which was laid with some address, and diverted them exceedingly, by her evident embarrassment.

"It was," said she, "impossible that he could have any serious thoughts of a person, whose character was so compleatly opposite to his own."

They strengthened their insinuations, by urging every instance of improbable marriages that had fallen in their knowledge; and observed, that her extreme levity and politeness, would be very agreeably contrasted with the no less remarkable steadiness and bluntness of his character.

Maria immediately entered upon his defence; she affirmed that these qualities were

never exerted, but when milder means were ineffectual to restrain folly, or detect vice. She protested, that he possessed in an eminent degree, all the entertaining powers that could render conversation agreeable, as well as the less obvious, though more estimable talents, that distinguish him as a friend, and member of society. In the midst of her panegyric, she suddenly met her mother's eye, and as she well knew how to read its language, she speedily terminated her oration.

Her young friends praised her ingenuity, and took leave with some significant smiles.

Maria could not recover her equanimity; for though she knew it would be impossible that Mr. Herbert should really think of so dissipated a mistress as Miss Mandeville actually was, she felt uneasy that such an idea had gone abroad, and strove, though in vain, to drive it from her memory.

Mrs.

Mrs. Williams asked her, "Why she had been so warm in refuting what she was so fully convinced, was a falshood."

Maria could only answer, "that she owed such a justification to her friend, whose character she thought suffered, from the mistaken account."

"Your friendships, my dear," said Mrs. Williams, "preserve their wonted warmth, and Mr. Herbert is now the faultless being which Miss Raby was formerly. You cannot allow the shadow of error to those who possess your esteem. It is possible, however, that the world may give a different construction to your motives, and not knowing that you are only platonic in your attachment, may fancy you a little selfish in disapproving his addresses to Miss Mandeville."

I cannot describe Maria's concern at this suggestion, nor the warmth with which she vindicated herself from such a charge.

Her

Her mother affected to believe her exculpation, but amongst the incidents she recounted to Mr. Herbert, the above was mentioned as a circumstance by no means tending to inspire despair.

Such encouragement soon determined the lover to offer to the amiable girl, his sincere and affectionate heart. As his concealment had rather proceeded from reasonable apprehensions, than awkward shyness, he soon found an opportunity favourable to the discovery which he so ardently wished. His conversations with Maria generally took a literary turn; and he, without any apparent design, introduced the following verses, which he said were written by a friend of his, and addressed to a young lady, to whom he was tenderly attached.

Far from the altar of the Cyprian queen,
To virtuous love a sacred shrine I'll rear;
And every power shall ornament the scene,
That boasts a likeness to my angel fair.

Chaste as her fame, the lily there shall grow,
 And blended with the rose of beauty vie;
 There shall the azure hyacinthus blow,
 Meek as the lustre of her downcast eye.
 Loud, as if 'midst the Eleuvinian choir,
 Hence ye profane! my warning lips shall say;
 Hence every selfish wish and loose desire;
 Here virtue darts her all-pervading ray.
 The sylvan deities shall haunt the grove,
 There truth, immortal goddess! shall repair;
 To stamp her impress on my vows of love,
 To tinge the blushes of my artless fair.
 There will I lead my charmer, there impart
 My warm esteem, my tenderness sincere,
 My love disdains the colouring of art,
 The cant of flattery would offend her ear.
 My love I'll tell; unbounded is the theme,
 My throbbing heart its fervour shall approve;
 Each daily musing, every nightly dream,
 Stamp'd by her image all confirm my love.
 That image still, to these fond eyes appears
 Grac'd with each excellence of mind and mein;
 She smiles, and joy illumines my future years;
 She frowns, and life is but a joyless scene.
 Oh fair, though latent object of my vows,
 Wilt thou accept affection's votive strain;
 Receive a youth, who all unpractis'd bows,
 And feels a passion he could never feign?
 My tongue ineloquent but coldly pleads:
 Let then my eyes my soul's fond wishes prove;
 While generous sentiments and virtuous deeds,
 Confess my wish to merit her I love.

Should'ft

Should'st thou to me thy valued hand resign,
My heart shall prize thee, and my arm defend;
Thy joys, thy fears, thy sorrows shall be mine,
Whilst in the husband each fond name I blend.
Retentive gratitude, unswerving truth,
My ever fond affections shall engage;
Raze every thorn that threatens the peace of youth,
And scatter roses on the path of age.

Maria was so pleased with the sentiments expressed in the preceding lines, that she could scarce avoid felicitating the lady who had made this agreeable conquest. Her approbation determined Herbert to own himself their author; nor did he leave her long in perplexity, as to the object to whom they were inscribed. In declaring his attachment, he used terms equally expressive of affection and esteem. His manner was respectful without servility, and he appeared desirous to gain her heart, through the medium of her understanding. Though anxious to meet with a favourable reply, he seemed more desirous that her answer should be agreeable to herself, than to his wishes; nor would he

permit his impatience to prescribe a rule, that might pain her delicacy, by enforcing an immediate decision. On the contrary, he begged permission to introduce the subject at a future opportunity, and then left her to consult with reason and her own inclinations, and to follow their determinations.

Maria's first reflection, when alone, was a parallel between the different modes of courtship, which her present and former lover had adopted. Mr. Herbert had not endeavoured to bewilder her in a maze of tender and unmeaning rhetoric; he had not set her heart and duty at variance; he had even wished her to consider and reflect. And as he had not uttered one passionate imprecation, or denounced his positive resolution of expiring the instant that she refused him, she had full liberty to weigh every objection, without considering what dreadful effects a denial would have on the discarded lover. She soon found, that the only dissuaves she could recollect, originated in her care to preserve the propriety

propriety of her own behaviour. Her attachment to Sir Henry Neville was publickly known; and though Mr. Herbert had not considered it as a reason against a second choice, the world probably might. Besides, her resolutions against marriage had been avowed to all her acquaintance, and to break them, would expose her justly to the ridicule due to inconsistency.

These were the only reasons that urged her to reject a man, whose merit she sincerely approved; and as they did not appear absolutely conclusive, she thought there could be no impropriety in consulting a casuist on the subject.

C H A P. XVII.

MRS. Williams, who was the counselor to whom Maria referred her scruples, did not immediately give a direct reply. She made some general observations to Mr. Herbert's advantage, and begged Maria would attentively consider whether she saw any peculiarity in his person, manner, or disposition, which appeared to be discordant to her own sentiments of agreeableness and propriety.

“A young

"A young woman, my dear girl," said she, "should never think of encouraging a lover, whom in any point of view she considers to be disagreeable; even if her dislike is rather ascribable to whimsical caprice, than any well founded notion of propriety. She ought, in this instance, either totally to subdue, or else indulge it. Taste is, I grant, by no means proper to be an implicit guide in a matter of such importance, as the choice of an husband: we should, however, give it some consequence, and allow it a kind of qualified negative. It may decide on what is pleasing, for that relates only to ourselves. The estimable qualities require a different criterion."

Maria saw nothing in Herbert's behaviour that she disapproved. "I could," said she, blushing, "say more, did I not fear that you would think me too apt to indulge favourable opinions. Do, I beseech you, give me yours."

"Young women," resumed Mrs. Williams, "especially those whose minds are formed for constancy and reflection, are apt to fall into an error, extremely prejudicial to their peace. The inconstancy of a lover wounds them so deeply, that they transfer to the whole sex; the odium that is justly due to the perfidy or treachery of an individual. Hasty resolutions are formed, which if adhered to, lead to morbid melancholy. I am far from thinking that female happiness is of necessity connected with marriage; but though many sensible reasons may be adduced in favour of celibacy, I believe they generally are, and indeed experience teaches us they ought to be most valid, when we have no eligible opportunity of exchanging it for the conjugal state.

Of the miserable couples we daily see, some, I grant, would be happier if separated; and many wives who have made an imprudent choice, earnestly wish that it was in their power to return to the unencumbered
leisure

leisure and self-indulgence which singleness allow. Many of the fraternity of old maids discover, by their good humour and cheerfulness, (Mrs. Williams and I are acquainted) that their situation by no means deserves the ridicule and odium generally affixed to it. But as candour must be the attendant on such characters, they will allow, that had they met with an agreeable offer, which they could prudently have accepted, they would not, in the early part of their lives, have refused to take the marriage vow.

“ With respect to my opinion of Mr. Herbert, integrity seems the predominant feature of his soul. He has a greater share of independency of sentiment, than I ever knew a man possess. Nothing can persuade him to alter a conduct which he considers to be conscientious; and he fears no person's resentment, when engaged in the cause of virtue. He appears to be a man, whom the allurements of ambition, avarice, and pleasure, can never detach from duty. The on-

ly spring, by which his heart is assailable, is tenderness; of which he possesses an infinitely greater share than any florid pretender whom I ever met. It is in this light that I view his filial piety; his behaviour to his mother is strongly indicative of compassion and gratitude. How anxiously does he attend to all her wants and desires; with what respectful propriety does he bear those starts of petulance, which pain makes her sometimes give way to; how very amiable are his endeavours to conceal those lapses of memory, which are ranked amongst the imbecilities of age! a man who can, in the sprightliest period of life, give up even his favourite pursuits to these neglected and unfashionable duties, can never distress the female heart, whose only hope and solace, is his protection and love.

“ His faults are warmth, and perhaps I may add, positiveness of temper; but he is too undisguised and generous to be resentful; and a superior share of good sense, preserves

serves him from frequently falling into error. Mr. Herbert's wife has only to exert a self-command, 'till her husband's transient ebb of passion subsides; and she is then sure of meeting with every reparation which a candid acknowledgment of his fault can render. I grant this is a blemish in his character, and did it frequently appear, or was it carried to an extreme, I should view it in a more criminal light. But as it is in part subdued by reason and benevolence, I confess I consider it, but as the shade of humanity, in a soul truly desirous of attaining to perfect goodness, and it serves to place in a stronger light, many estimable virtues.

“ In all my anxious cares, Maria, to form your mind, I never yet held out a lover as your reward. Had this been my chief view in your education, I should have directed my attention to your possessing more shewy accomplishments, which in this tinsel age, attract the general notice of men. But I rather wished you to pass through life unnoticed,

noticed, than to be received with universal eclat, for qualities, which can boast no intrinsic merit. Providence, indulgent in the extreme to my desires, has made you in every point of view amiable. It superadds an opportunity of securing your happiness, if an union with a man, possessed of honour, sense, and virtue, can secure it; one who tenderly loves you, and whose fortune is equal to your birth and wishes. I should blame you, if a fear of the ridicule of which your girlish determinations against marriage will draw on you, could influence you to renounce so pleasing a prospect."

Though this discourse exceeded the usual length of Mrs. Williams's harangues, Maria was too great an admirer of her mother's oratory, to complain of its prolixity. Respect for her opinion, prevented her from controverting arguments, which most daughters will, I hope, allow to be strong and conclusive.

Mr.

Mr. Herbert, at his next visit, had the transport to hear his lovely mistress, with a timid and ingenuous air, express her acceptance of his proffered heart.

Very few preliminaries can intervene, to retard an union which is founded in equality of fortune, situation, and mind. It was agreed to accept of Mrs. Herbert's offer, of resigning her house to the young people; it being her express wish to reside with Mrs. Williams, in her pleasant little box, and to enjoy, through the small remainder of her life, the uninterrupted pleasure of conversing with the friend and companion of her early years.

Maria proposed to Mr. Herbert, that beside occasional calls, two days in every week should be dedicated to the society of their parents, which all parties agreed, that a little intermission would still more endear.

Though

Though the fervour of Maria's friendship for Mrs. Pierpoint, had now greatly declined, she thought, from their long intimacy, that it was incumbent upon her to inform that lady of her present prospects. The letter was dictated in the usual style of easy confidence, and in the conclusion she pressed her to be a more punctual correspondent. The answer was somewhat stiff, but I will subjoin it for the instruction of others, who wish to know how to get rid of an inferior acquaintance.

The honourable Mrs. Pierpoint presents kind compliments to Miss Williams, and assures her, that she possesses her sincerest wishes for her happiness; but she fears that it will be impossible, if Miss Williams persists in her design of marrying Mr. Herbert, for her to preserve the pleasure of her acquaintance, considering the very different line of life into which Mrs. Pierpoint is now thrown. She continues exceedingly Miss Williams's friend, and laments the necessity of
of

of declining the correspondence which Miss Williams has done her the honour to press, as her leisure is really very small, and her connexions numerous.

My readers will observe every turn in this epistle, upon which I shall make a short comment.

The term honourable, at the beginning, was a newly acquired title, on account of the father of Major Pierpoint having acceded to an earldom, though without a suitable addition to his income. I should have premised, that he had disinherited his son for marrying a cit, which is an unpardonable offence in the eyes of those, whose birth exceeds their pecuniary abilities. The same word honour, towards the conclusion of Mrs. Pierpoint's letter, conveyed a very different meaning, and was intended to express the proud humility, which the little great sometimes assume.

With

With respect to Mr. Herbert's birth, I can affirm that his father was the youngest son of the youngest branch of a very respectable and dignified family, and his mother was actually the second cousin to a Scotch Baronet, by the male line. But my well-born readers must have discovered this long ago. His sentiments, I flatter myself, sufficiently vouch his belonging to the Patrician order.

As this letter effected no change in Maria's intentions, marriage proved, as it frequently does, the grave of female friendship.

Mrs. Edmund Herbert regretted, that notwithstanding the instability of her once dear Charlotte's temper, she only altered from one foolish propensity to another; and the honourable Mrs. Pierpoint, whenever the subject of pretty women was mentioned, would recollect a rural beauty, whom she had formerly seen, and who really would have made

made some noise in the world, if she had not thrown herself away in marriage.

Having now conducted my heroine to the Temple of Hymen, the general termination of female adventures, I shall take leave of my readers with some reflections which were made by Mrs. Williams, on the evening preceding her daughter's marriage.

Mr. Herbert had just left the room, with all the transport of tenderness, which a near prospect of happiness inspired, when Maria, who during the whole evening appeared unusually pensive, turned aside her head to conceal from her mother's observation, the tears which streamed down her cheek. That attentive parent anxiously inquired the cause, and found that they proceeded from the delicate apprehensions, that she should not always appear equally amiable in her lover's eyes; that they should part with less regret, and meet with less pleasure.

“ I have

“ I have a fear,” said Mrs. Williams, “ but it is not that indifference should usurp the place of love. My knowledge of both your characters, makes me think this impossible. My apprehensions arise from the extreme susceptibility of your mind ; and I entreat you, from regard to your future peace, that you will recollect the candid observations of the amiable Desdemona, men are but men, nor must a wife always expect the behaviour of a lover, even from an affectionate husband. Somewhat of business will, at times, puddle the clearest temper, and little inadvertencies, or words foreign to the general tenor of their hearts, will escape from lips, accustomed only to express the laws of kindness. I charge you, by all your dearest hopes, forbear to ponder on these hasty expressions. Drive them from your mind ; take no merit to yourself for excusing them, lest you should annex an idea of patient suffering to your own character, and unkindness to your husband’s.

" I do not advise you to be placid, cheerful and prudent; you are not likely to err in these points. My fear is, that you should indulge your tenderness to a degree painful to yourself, and distressing to your husband. Shew him, my child, that you are his helpmate, not his incumbrance. Let not his distress at any disastrous circumstance, be aggravated by the fear, that you will sink under affliction. Convince him that you have fortitude to bear the common ills of life, as well as patience to endure its common provocations.

Your future path, though it promises to be pleasant, cannot be entirely through arca-dian scenes of felicity. Trials must occur, even to the happiest. It is the part of reason and religion, to mitigate their severity. Humility, which inspires a lowly mind and moderate desires, is the surest road to content. Such a disposition, though perhaps incompatible with the nice refinement of feeling, which it is now the fashion to affect,

affect, is not only consistent, but congenial to the exertions of true piety, tenderness, and benevolence. I have seen much of human life, and will give you the conclusions which experience teaches me to form, in the words of our female Epictetus.

"To temper'd wishes, just desires,

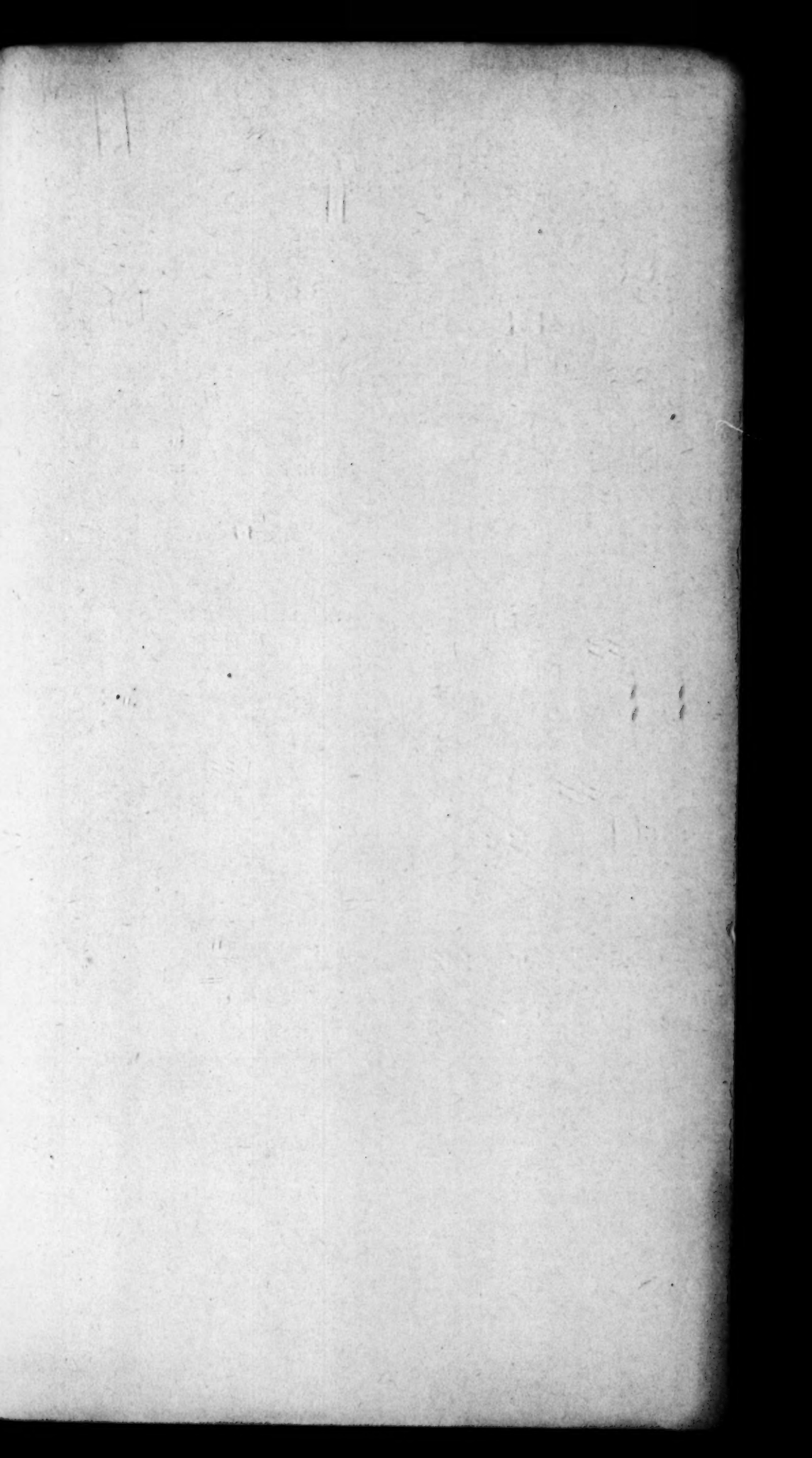
"Is happiness confin'd;

"And deaf to folly's call attends

"The music of the mind."

VIDE MRS. CARTER'S POEMS.

F I N I S.
20 JY 63



J. Vol. 1

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